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ONE-ARMED ALF, THE GIANT HUNTER OF THE GREAT LAKES.

BY OLL COOMES,

AUTHOR OF "LITTLE HURRICANE," "OLD SOLITARY," "LITTLE TEXAS," "EAGLE KIT," "LONG BEARD," ETC., ETC.



THE GIANT HUNTER AND HIS HOUND.

One-Armed Alf.

The Giant Hunter of the Great Lakes;
OR,
THE MAID OF MICHIGAN.

A ROMANCE OF THE WAR OF 1812.

BY OLL COOMES,

AUTHOR OF "LITTLE HURRICANE," "OLD SOLITARY," "LITTLE TEXAS," "EAGLE KIT," "LONG BEARD," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE MEETING IN THE FOREST.

THE sun of a summer day, of the year of 1812, had long since risen, sending its warmth to the very roots of the great trees, when a human voice was heard in the depths of the wilderness some ten leagues east of where the Muskegon river pays tribute to the vast expanse of Lake Michigan: not a savage war-whoop nor a cry of distress, but a call which was immediately answered from a point not far distant. The call was that of an Indian who stood in a little open area, or glade, surrounded by tall trees and walled in beneath with a dense growth of under-brush. He was a chief of the Ojibways, as the peculiarities of his dress and application of the various colored pigments upon his face denoted—a tall, athletic-looking fellow in the very prime of a vigorous life. His shoulders were broad and massive; his chest deep and swelling, and his limbs well-proportioned and muscular. His swarthy features were thoroughly Indian, subtle and cunning in expression. His small black eyes, glittering like beads of fire, were full of the vindictive craft of his race, while the thin lips and broad, flat nose with dilated nostrils, showed a predominance of energy and passion.

His majestic form was wrapped in a blanket of English manufacture, and its cleanliness was indicative of its newness. In his girdle hung a tomahawk and scalping-knife, while he stood leaning upon a rifle, which was also of English manufacture, and was evidently a new acquisition to the chieftain's private arsenal.

The glade wherein this Ojibway stood, was covered with a growth of short grass; this, however, was trampled down and partially dead, while here and there were the remnants of recent camp-fires. There were three or four narrow passages through the surrounding thicket converging there, and upon these paths the Indian kept a close, keen watch as if he were expecting some one.

As the moments wore away into minutes he started suddenly, when he heard a slight rustle in the undergrowth along one of the passages; and then a light of satisfaction kindled in his black, glittering eyes when he caught the flash of something red among the foliage. A moment later a white man dressed in the scarlet uniform of a British officer, stepped into the opening before him.

This second person was a man of about forty years, whose bloated face and bloodshot eyes told of a life of dissipation; and the hard lines about his eyes and mouth betrayed a wicked, unscrupulous character. His uniform denoted the rank of lieutenant of infantry, though he had no regular command, having been commissioned by the king for past services among the Indians.

"Waugh!" ejaculated the Indian, as he entered the opening, "English chief come at last—Black Bird been here ever since sun look over the trees."

"Yes, yes, red-skin," replied the officer. "I heard your call several minutes ago, and answered it at once. Where are the other chiefs?"

"They come soon—ugh! Big Elk come now."

The English lieutenant turned and saw the chief referred to enter the opening. He was immediately followed by another and still another, until not less than a dozen chiefs were assembled. Each was the head sachem, or representative of the different northern tribes, both north and south of the Great Lakes; and was armed with a new rifle and wrapped in a new blanket—all of English supply, and strong proof of deep machinations on the part of the British crown.

That they were there by appointment, was evident from the circumstances under which they met, as well as the presence of the English officer there in that isolated spot of the great wilderness.

Having kindly and cordially welcomed the arrival of the last chief in his smooth, bland way, Lieutenant Ensign Mackclogan seated himself upon the ground in true Indian style, and drew from his pocket a handsomely-ornamented pipe, which he proceeded to load and light.

While he was thus engaged, the chiefs, following his example, seated themselves in a circle upon the grass, when Mackclogan announced that the pipe of peace would be passed around, after which ceremony they would enter into a solemn pow-wow.

The seal of Indian friendship was first passed from Mackclogan to Black Bird, who took a few

whiffs and passed it to the next. In this manner it passed from one to another, until it again came into the hands of the white man.

Black Bird now arose, and with solemn dignity, announced the great council open, to which he added:

"Chiefs and brothers of the great Ojibways, Ottawas, Pottawatomies, Hurons and Chippewas, the war-chief of our father across the great salt lake has called us here in council. Each of you carry a new rifle and a new blanket, but where did you get them? Our Canada father gave them to us, and he has promised us many more. He has sent his war-chief to meet us here and give us the news from his people. Let us hearken while he speaks."

Black Bird sat down, and Lieutenant Mackclogan arose and began his speech. As he proceeded, his low, dark brows became knitted and the spirit of evil was visible upon every lineament of his repulsive, bloated face. He was smooth-tongued and deceitful, and had long been one of the mercenary tools of the British in America, employed to use his diplomatic powers among the Indians, to keep up a feeling of prejudice toward our people. He was at heart a bad man, and all the evil of his soul cropped out upon his features and in his language, quite naturally.

Before he had proceeded far with his speech, however, he was suddenly interrupted by the appearance of a new-comer, whose presence caused his face to brighten, and his eyes to sparkle with an eager, anxious light, despite the murmur of indignation that passed from the lips of the assembled chiefs.

CHAPTER II.
THE RUM-TRADER.

The intruder was a white man well-known to the Indians and Mackclogan as Whisky Mug, a name contracted from Jabez Muggins, and an odd specimen of humanity he was, his very presence evoking a spirit of mirth. He was about forty years of age, short, thick, and heavy set. His face was broad and beardless, his eyes keen, bright and sparkling; and his mouth large, yet wreathed in a quaint, comical smile. Withal, Jabez Muggins was a rough-looking individual, yet the personification of a free-and-easy good-naturedness that was not in harmony with his surroundings. He was dressed in a garb, half-civilized and half-savage, and wore an old coon-skin cap, from which the fur had all been worn off until the crown glittered like a bald poll, giving him an appearance as odd and quaint as an old Teutonic professor.

He possessed no weapons of any kind, but at his back he carried a small wooden keg by means of straps attached to each end of the vessel, and passing over the left shoulder and under the right arm. To this strap was attached, by means of a buckskin string, a small tin cup of antiquated appearance.

As he entered the glade, the whisky-trader seemed greatly surprised at the presence of the councilors.

"What brings you here, you old sot?" exclaimed Mackclogan, in apparent anger.

"What brings me?" replied the whisky-trader, why, my legs, in course, Mack, but, I'll be smashed into thunderations if I knowed you hipopalorum of the peninsula war tucked in yere—no, I just slid in to count my loss and gain, and take a chunk of a sleep: but I'll be hugged to death by the poortiest leetle squaw on the p'nt if I ain't in luck; for I know you're all dryer than fish a million leagues from water."

As he spoke thus, Muggins removed his keg from his back, and placing it upon the ground, seated himself upon it; then crossing his short legs, and folding his arms over his breast, regarded the councilors with a look of comical indifference.

"Do you know, Whisky Mug," asked the Englishman, "that your wares are liable to confiscation?"

"Confiscation? Wherefore, Mack? Expostulate a little," demanded the trader, with a quizzical grin.

"You are an intruder on sacred ground—so to speak; you are within the council lodge of the great Indian tribes of the North."

"Scat!" drawled the whisky-trader, with a chuckle; "you're spoutin' now, lieutenant. Even if you have met to confab over your affairs and such, arn't I the guidin'-star of yer joy—yer guardian angel, come with light and sunshine and joy and liquid intelligence plugged up here in ole Knowledge-Box?"

So saying, the whisky-trader sprung to his feet, and, with a business-like whistle, proceeded to draw a cup of whisky. This done, he drank the liquor himself, permitting it to gurgle down his throat in a manner intended to whet the thirst of the Indians; and was soon engaged in dealing out whisky to the councilors, drinking about every fifth cupful himself. One drain, however, only served to sharpen the Indian's inordinate love for the liquor, and so the second and third drinks were called for and dealt out, the trader continuing to take his intermediate potations; so that by the time the third drink was completed, his hand began to tremble and his voice to thicken.

The Indians were just beginning to feel the effect of their potations when the fourth was called for; but, to their surprise and regret, they found that the trader had fallen into his old habit of drinking twice to every man's once, thereby getting so beastly drunk that he had failed to close the faucet, and let the remnants of the whisky run out upon the ground, while he fell backward upon the grass in his drunken stupor.

"See here, Whisky Mug," cried Mackclogan, "you shall not sleep here; get up and begone at once."

"Durned if I do, (hic) Britisher," muttered the trader, with a drunken leer, "fur I've (hic) done the fair thing by you (hic) drunken dogs—ho, what a gal—arious (hic) Injun summer's this—all's hazy's a dream; and oh, (hic) how the trees 're dancin'—lick it down ole oak (hic) up sides and down middle thar, (hic) Mack—"

And the trader sunk heavily to the earth in a drunken sleep, but, with an oath, Mackclogan gave him a kick with his booted foot and succeeded in arousing him again.

"See here, Muggins," he said, "you must either leave here, or swear by the Great Spirit that—"

"Durned if I do," muttered the trader; "I don't swear (hic) by the Great Spirit—swear by Popo—cattypetle's burnin' mountin' (hic) so I do; so you durned hipopa—(hic) can go on with yer rat-killin' and let me slum'er sweetly (hic)."

The whisky-trader sunk into a deep slumber, from which he could not be aroused; but the occasional delirious starts and cries, which seemed to throw him into convulsions almost, were sufficient evidence of his total prostration, which would, perhaps, last for hours.

The councilors, however, had not imbibed so deeply as to lose sight of the object of their meeting, and when Mackclogan had assured himself that no liquor remained in the cask, he called the chiefs' attention and continued the speech so abruptly broken off by the whisky-trader.

By his specious promises of all necessary aid from the British crown, and his incendiary falsehoods regarding the objects of the Yankees in prosecuting a war with Great Britain, he well succeeded in arousing the wildest passions of the assembled chiefs, and elicited from Black Bird the following reply:

"The words of our white brother have sunk deep in our hearts. We are ready to strike the blow that will free our land forever. We have waited for this time to come. When the new moon has come then will the Ojibways, the Ottawas, the Hurons, the Pottawatomies and the Chippewas be gathered together in the forests of Michigan. Mackinaw must fall; then we will sweep southward and take many scalps upon the Muskegon and Kilamazoo. The Spirit of the Woods, too, must be destroyed, for his victims are many, and he fills the heart of the red-man with terror—"

"Who is the Spirit of the Wilderness, Black Bird?" interrupted Mackclogan.

"No one knows. He is an enemy that has never been seen. He shoots down our people when they go alone into the forest to hunt the deer. The crack of his rifle has often been heard, yet his footsteps have never been found. He shoots our warriors through the heart with a bullet so small that its track can scarcely be found."

"He's some white hunter or avenger I dare say," said Mackclogan, "some Yankee scout."

"We have not seen nor heard of any white avenger. There is but one white man outside of the Muskegon settlement on these hunting-grounds, and him the Great Spirit has smitten with a sad heart and misfortune. His right hand the Great Spirit kept back when he gave him life that it might not be raised against the red-man."

"What's his name, Black Bird?" asked Mackclogan.

"One Arm, Injun call him. One-Armed Alf, his black servant call him."

Mackclogan started up, and, fixing a keen, stately glance upon Black Bird, asked:

"Are you sure he is called One-Armed Alf?"

"Yes—me know it—me see him many times—he live in log-cabin down on Muskegon."

"Then do not trust to his pretended friendship, Black Bird," replied Mackclogan; "he may be a secret spy and enemy watching all our movements—yea, he may be the Spirit of the Wilderness!"

"Waugh!" ejaculated Black Bird, with an air that implied his disbelief; "he can not strike—he carries no weapons—no gun—no tomahawk—nothing."

"That may all be, Black Bird," replied Mackclogan; "but watch him; the Yangeese are all sly and treacherous."

"He no enemy, but, if the hatchet is to be dug up between the red-man and the Yangeese, the scalp of One Arm will court in our victories. But already the sun is sinking, and Black Bird and his friends have a long ways to go to reach their lodges. Let the chief of our Canada brothers go back and say that Black Bird and all his friends will be ready to strike at Mackinaw when two more suns have yet."

"I will bear your message to your friends in

Canada," replied the Englishman, "and I will tell them to have belts of wampum, and more new rifles and blankets for you when you come."

A grim smile of satisfaction passed over the swarthy features of the circle of savage chieftains; then each one in turn reiterated his promise to march with his warriors forthwith upon Mackinaw.

The object of their meeting being thus settled, the councilors prepared for their departure. This required but a moment, and as they filed away in different directions into the forest, each one cast a longing, regretful look at the empty keg of the whisky-trader.

For some time after their departure the drunken trader lay in his profound sleep, now and then tossing about and muttering in a delirious, incoherent tone. But, at length, he began to recover from his debauch, and when he was able he arose to a sitting posture, and, rubbing his eyes to clear them from the hazy mist that dimmed them, muttered:

"Whoop tee doodle, whoop t'doo, and whar are ye now, Jabez, ole tiger? Surely not 'n wilderness of Judea nor desert of Salbarah. No, no, I sw'ar by Propocatypete's fire that you're 'n neither place; but you've been takin' a drunk, you beast. Fust thing you know you'll wake up and find yourself deader than a nit—but oh! I know now whar I be, and I wonder whar them red skinflints and that ole rusty-coated 'Clogan hev gone? Wouldn't care a durn if they'd gone down to the sulphur-diggin's, but they never chalked over the rinktums for them 're spasms. Mebby, tho', they'll do it some time with interest, so I mout as well p'int my ole red nose to'rds Whisky Korner and feed ole Knowledge with more inspiration."

With quite an effort he staggered to his feet, and then, securing his whisky-keg, he managed to sling it upon his back; then reeled away across the glade and disappeared in the undergrowth.

In leaving the glade Black Bird, accompanied by two of the chiefs, moved away in the direction taken by Mackclogan, who had preceded them in his departure. The three chiefs moved in silence, like so many grim phantoms, and had journeyed more than two miles from the council ground, when a low cry suddenly escaped the forward chief's lips and he came to an abrupt halt.

A few rods in advance they saw Lieutenant Mackclogan seated upon the ground, leaning against the trunk of a tree, apparently asleep, or engaged in mental reflections. His attitude was one of ease and repose, yet his presence there so soon after the recent interview in the glade, and under existing circumstances, excited their amazement.

For full a minute the chiefs gazed, first at the recumbent form of the British officer, then in among the shifting shadows around them.

Then with cautious footstep they approached the officer. He stirred not, as they drew nearer him. Was he asleep? Yes; and soundly, too, for Black Bird approached him and spoke, but the Englishman did not stir.

Then the chief's keen eye detected a dark, wet spot upon the left breast of the officer's scarlet coat. Closer examination revealed the startling fact that it was BLOOD! It came from a wound beneath. Mackclogan had been shot through the breast, and his silent attitude, and the expression of pain and agony frozen upon his face, told that he was stone dead!

The discovery of this startling fact seemed to fill the breasts of the chiefs with new terror, and, in trembling tones, Black Bird exclaimed:

"Our white friend is dead. A bullet has pierced his heart. The Spirit of the Woods is abroad. He slew our friend; he is upon our trail—come."

Without further words the three terrified Indians turned and glided into the woods, leaving the body of their late friend reclining there by the great oak in death's repose.

CHAPTER III.

ONE-ARMED ALF, THE GIANT SCOUT.

NEARLY, or quite three leagues from the eastern shore of Lake Michigan, a small, stout-built log-cabin stood solitary and alone, surrounded by the deep, dense shadows of a mighty forest. At the foot of the eminence upon which the structure stood, the sluggish waters of the Muskegon river crept onward to pay tribute to the broad waters of Michigan. Away upon all sides the great wildwood stretched its dark, green bosom, here and there diversified with great and small water-courses, and dimpled tiny lakes.

The cabin was strongly built of hewn logs, and was the only evidence of civilization in the forest, for miles around. On the outer walls of the cabin were numerous skins stretched to dry; and these with other evidence to be seen about, was sufficient proof of the cabin being the home of some bold, fearless trapper. And for a white man to live there alone, unmolested by the wary red-man, was also proof of the existence of friendly relations between them. No loop-hole pierced the wall of the cabin, nor were there any defensive measures visible about the place.

Let us enter that lone cabin and see who its

occupant is. As we cross the threshold we are greeted in a friendly manner by a single individual, a negro. This ebon son of Ethiopia was about five and thirty years of age, and in stature was about the average size, although his limbs and features were somewhat rough and angular. His hair was jet black, short, crisp and curly, and his eyes were large, and, in fact, the most prominent feature of the man, if we except the double row of white ivory teeth that were constantly displayed.

It is on the day succeeding the events narrated in the preceding chapters, and although he was alone, it was evident, from his nervous movements and anxious, expectant glances out into the forest, that he was looking for some one at the time.

The truth of this was soon established when the figure of a white man suddenly emerged from the forest shadows and approached the cabin, followed by a large, sleek deerhound. He was a man whose very presence was calculated to command the attention, respect and admiration of a stranger, not only from the power of his *physique*, but all the attributes that go to make a model of perfect manhood, physical and intellectual. He was not over thirty years of age and appeared even younger. In stature he was far above the average height, standing almost seven feet in his moccasins. His form was built in proportion to his height and bore evidence of prodigious muscular and physical power; and the lightness of his footsteps and grace of movements told of his suppleness and activity.

His hair was dark, though streaked with a few threads of silver, and hung in straight tresses down about his shoulders. His face was smoothly shaven, showing the full expression of the bronzed features, that were not unprepossessing. His eyes were of a dark-gray color and pleasant in expression, yet there was a strange, vacant look in them which revealed a hidden, burning fire away down in his great heart. In fact, there was a sad, silent and clouded look upon the whole face. This man could have been neither a trapper nor hermit, depending on his own efforts for sustenance, from a single fact—his right arm was gone! And still another fact, corroborating that of his not being a hunter, was that of his carrying no firearms of any kind; neither was he habited in a borderman's costume, but wore a peculiar kind of a suit made of nankeen and dyed the color of the forest leaves. Even the slouched hat and buck-skin leggings and moccasins were of the same color; and his partiality for this particular hue must have been engendered from the desire to evade discovery by hostile eyes through contrast of colors, when journeying among the green shrubbery and foliage of the forest.

We say he was unarmed; yet he did carry a heavy, knotty cane with a crooked head and brass ferule on the end, which might have been a dangerous weapon if skillfully handled; still, it would have been of no use there against wild savages, wild beasts and gnawing hunger.

With rapid strides this giant stranger crossed the narrow opening and approached the cabin door. When the latter was reached, he opened it without ceremony and entered the building, his hound stopping without and stretching himself on the ground near the door with his own characteristic familiarity.

"Ho de good deliberance," cried the negro, as the man entered the door; "you's come at las', Mas'r Alf! Whar you's been gone dis ebberlasting time dat's been more'n a million years to dis nigger?"

"Why, Ethiope, what's the matter?" asked the white man, in a cool, calm tone, while a faint smile played about his mouth.

"De matter?" Ethiope fairly shrieked; "why, man, jist as sure as your name's One-Armed Alf, de debbil's to pay—I sw'ar to de natural system, he am. Why, mas'r, don't you t'ink dar's a big war declared between de whole United States ob North America and all creation. Mackinaw's to be'tacked to-morry, by a hundred million red-skins, and den don't you t'ink de good-fur-nothing scamps am gwine to march on Point Michigan?"

"Is this a fact, Ethiope?" asked One-Armed Alf.

"I'll jis' be bu'sted into a gob of nothing if it ar'n't so, Mas'r Alf. I sw'ar it's so. Why, de Merican General, Ike Hull, wid a switching big pile ob sojer men, am over in Canada now, jist making Inging ha'r and British fur fly like de dirt from de heels ob a race-hoss, I sw'ar he am!"

"Indeed, indeed," said the giant, in a thoughtful mood, fixing his eyes upon the floor, "this is no more than I have long anticipated. The English have long been provoking us to extreme measures, and are preparing, and have been for some time, for war. I detected this in a strange movement among the Indians which I know was originated by British emissaries. The new rifles and blankets lately placed in the hands of the red-men attest this. And so the war has really begun? The Point, you say, is threatened after the capture of Mackinaw?"

"Dat's de programmy, now, an' dar's work for you now, mas'r."

"And how am I to work?"

"H—ow?" screamed Ethiope, with apparent surprise; "hav'n't you got jis' as good legs as de moose? or am you 'feared ob de Spirit ob de Woods?"

"I have the same limbs I always had, Ethiope, with the single exception of an arm. I am not afraid of the Spirit of the Woods, because I do not believe there is such an avenger, but there are over a hundred Indians at this very moment watching my cabin and movements."

"Oh, my! oh, me! oh, Lor'!" cried Ethiope, in sudden terror, his eyes growing larger, his lips parting, and his whole face assuming a serio-comical expression; "if dat's de truf, and nothing but de truf, Mas'r Alf, den dis poor black chile's days am 'bout figured out, and I never spoke a prayer in all my born life. Oh, I see it, mas'r; I'm a lost nigger, bound for total eklication and destruction."

"We may have to fight for our lives, Ethiope, before night," said the scout, solemnly.

"Fight? dis poor black nigger chile fight? Oh, Mas'r Alf! and dar's not a gun in de shanty, nor nuffin' but dis chile's banjo and de meat-knife. Ki, yil it am awful sarcumstance, Mas'r Alf. It'll be death in de fust disgrace; but den jis' let a red nigger ob an Injin show his head yer and I'll wade into him, tooth and nail, foot and fist, in a slap-upset way."

"I will inaugurate no war with the red-skins, Ethiope," replied One-Armed Alf, "but I must manage some way or other to get word to the garrison at Mackinaw of the intended attack upon the place, and I must do it without leaving this vicinity, else my mission here in this country will be at an end."

"Roarin' jingoes, Mas'r Alf! How de Sam-hill ye gwine to 'komplish de t'ing, if de conduct ob de Ingings mean hostilities? Dis niger wants light on de subject."

"Will you do me a favor?" asked the scout.

"Now dat—dat beats all git-out, Mas'r Alf. Why, boy, ain't I been doin' favors for you dis thousand years, now say?"

"I want you to take," continued the scout, in a low tone, "the bucket and go down to the river for water. On your return, in climbing the bank among those young hickories, pluck off a dozen or more of the largest green leaves and bring them to me."

"Lor' save me!" cried the negro, in perplexity, "what does de man mean? But dar's no use talking, so I'll jist run down and bring de water, and mebbe a few leaves'll fall into de bucket as I come up 'mong de hickories."

The negro companion and housekeeper of the scout took a bucket and departed on his mission. He was gone some time, but finally returned with the water and a number of green leaves. He had scarcely placed the bucket in its accustomed place, when a light footstep was heard at the door behind. Both the scout and the negro turned, and to their surprise and horror, saw a powerful savage warrior standing in the doorway, while in the yard behind him, others could be seen drawn up in front of the open door!

CHAPTER IV.

THE CABIN GUESTS.

ALTHOUGH surprised by the Indian's silent, unceremonious intrusion, One-Armed Alf welcomed him there with a well-affected air of cordiality, although he felt that the red-skin's presence there at that time boded no good.

"How do, One Arm and Thunder Cloud?" the Indian replied to the scout's welcome, in disjointed English.

"Well, as usual, Gray Hawk," replied the scout; "you and your braves are welcome to the wigwam of One Arm."

The chief crossed the threshold to the opposite side of the cabin and seated himself upon the ground, his warriors following his example with a silent, sullen demeanor.

"Spect One Arm surprised to see us come," the chief said.

"I admit I am both surprised and pleased, Gray Hawk, for you have never visited me in all the time I have been here."

"Come to talk with One Arm."

"I am glad of it, chief," said the scout, seating himself on a stool before his visitors.

"Does One Arm know Canada father and Indians fight Yangeses?"

"I have heard it intimated that there is to be a war, though I hope the rumor will prove to have no foundation of truth."

"All so—there be big war—many scalps will be taken."

"I am sorry—very sorry to hear it, Gray Hawk, for I had hopes that our people would never be arrayed against each other in battle again."

"How One Arm fight if have war?"

The chief put the question so plain and emphatic that there was no chance for evasion, although it had been the aim of the scout from the beginning of the conversation to do so.

"How?" he repeated; "why, Gray Hawk, how could I fight?"

"No fight with gun or tomahawk, but fight with heart," replied the chief.

From this the scout saw what the chief was endeavoring to come at. He was testing the

scale upon which the sympathies of the white man hung in the coming struggle. How to avert a direct answer was now the question. A falsehood he knew would only evoke suspicion on the part of his keen-sighted questioner, and an avowal of sympathies contrary to his own might place his life, as well as that of Ethiope, in imminent danger.

"How do you think my sympathies are, Gray Hawk?" he asked.

"Don't think any thing—One Arm much quiet—no fight-man—no talk much—all still."

"Then why not let me remain so?"

"Cause good heart in time of war help Indian heap much."

"Then suppose I tell you I am neutral—that is, I will take no part on either side in the coming war."

"White man jist like Indian. He can't look with open eyes and not see when two deer before him. Then if he want kill deer, he must decide clear before he shoot which one he want—he can't kill both. Same with heart. He must take sides with Canada father or Yangeese."

"I wish neither of them harm, Gray Hawk. Both have been friends to me. I live upon the land of the Yankees, as you call my people, and would it be right to steel my heart against them?"

The brow of the chief seemed to lower like a thunder-cloud. He saw that the Giant Scout had no desire to turn even in sympathy against his people; and the evil that arose in the Indian's heart could be plainly traced upon his broad, sensual face. The scout read it all, yet he permitted no look nor word to betray the emotions of fear it engendered.

There was a brief silence, during which the scout saw Gray Hawk steal a quick, furtive glance around him and at his warriors. Then he said:

"Then I have One Arm's answer?"

"Yes, I desire to remain neutral, Gray Hawk."

Without adding another word the chief arose, and calmly folding his blanket about his shoulders, turned, and with a sullen brow, walked out of the cabin and away into the forest, followed by his warriors.

When they were out of sight and hearing, the scout turned to Ethiope and said:

"Ethiope, I am afraid we are in danger. That Indian means to do us some mischief, and I propose to follow him and see what course he pursues."

"Oh, my good salvation!" cried the African, "whar's to be the end ob all dis mortal distraction? And you's gwine out, Mas'r Alf? Now do be keerful, boy, for if dem red-hearted niggers git hands on you, dey kill you in de slip-slapup'est way."

The Giant Scout took his long, heavy cane from the corner where he had deposited it, and left the cabin. He entered the woods at a point directly opposite the course taken by the Indians.

It was all of an hour before he came back, but, when he did, his face wore an expression of relief, and his footstep was lighter. Entering his cabin, he seated himself before a rude table, and taking the green leaves brought in by Ethiope, he carefully arranged them, one upon another, in a pile before him. This done, he took a sharp-pointed instrument, and proceeded to puncture them, following a certain defined mark.

When he had completed his task, he emptied the previously filled basket of its contents, and threw the punctured leaves into it. Then turning to Ethiope, he said:

"Ethiope, I want you to go down to the river for another bucket of water. In dipping it up, manage to let these leaves float out on the water so that they will reach the current and be carried down the river."

Without a moment's delay, the black man took the bucket and started for the river. His footsteps being quickened by some intuitive fear, he soon reached the stream, and having followed his master's directions in regard to the leaves, filled his pail and started on his return to the cabin. While hurrying along, his mind filled with strange thoughts, his attention was suddenly arrested by sight of a trail where some heavy body had been dragged across his path. The grass and leaves had been dragged up, showing that it had been recently made, not, however, since the negro had passed the point going down to the river, for he saw where he had crossed it. Upon careful examination the darky, whose fears seemed to have given way to curiosity, began a careful examination of the trail, and found that it was stained here and there with clots of blood. This discovery brought the negro to a sudden halt, but permitting his eyes to follow on in the direction which he knew, by the trail, the body had been dragged, he saw where the trail ended, a sight that forced a cry of horror from his lips. The body of an Indian was seated upon the ground, and leaning against the trunk of a tree in a cramped, listless manner, which, of itself, told that he was dead.

Growing still bolder through curiosity, Ethiope now advanced to the body. He saw that the Indian had been shot. The warm

blood was still oozing from a tiny bullet-hole in the left breast across which the crimson tide left a dark, coagulated track as it trickled down. But, the most astonishing of all, was the discovery that the dead Indian was the recent visitor at the cabin, Gray Hawk, the Ojibway chief!

Hastening on to the cabin, Ethiope dashed into the presence of the scout, apparently terrified by what he had seen.

"Why, Ethiope, what does all this mean?"

"Oh, my good Lor' salvation, Mas'r Alf," he cried, "I see'd as awful a sight as ebber I seen in all my days."

"What was it, Ethiope, what was it?"

"What was it? Oh! oh! I tell ye Mas'r Alf, it war a dead Inging; an' I'se jist gwine to pull up stakes and leave dis section ob de world and shin out fur P'int Michigan. I won't lib here and keep house for you a bit more."

"Why?"

"Ca'se de Spirit ob de Wilderness am about. He killed dat Inging."

"Did you know the Indian?"

"Know him? To be sure I knows him! He war dat conflumigated brat, Gray Hawk."

"Heavens!" exclaimed the Giant Scout, "Gray Hawk dead and so close to my home! Curse upon the Spirit of the Wilderness! It has placed its victim at my door, and we'll have to answer for it, Ethiope. Again I say, curses upon the Spirit of the Wilderness!"

CHAPTER V.

POINT MICHIGAN.

At the point where the Muskegon pours its waters into Lake Michigan, was located the little settlement known as Point Michigan, so called from its being situated upon a narrow point of land putting out into the lake. The place contained about a score of cabins, and numbered in all about a hundred souls. The people were of various classes and nationalities, engaged principally in hunting, trapping, and trading with the Indians and French Canadians. There were, however, a few who tilled a few acres of ground in Indian corn, for which they found ready demand at home.

At that time Point Michigan promised to be a place of great commercial interest at no distant day, but in the midst of its prosperity and infancy came the rumors of war with England. This, the settlers knew, would involve the Indians in Canada and the adjacent country around, in the struggle against them; and that all effort to hold out against the foe would be madness bordering on criminality, they all felt.

However, as the first rumor of war found its origin in no reliable quarter, the good settlers of the Point entertained hopes of its only being one of those false alarms that ever and anon thrilled along the border, striking terror to every heart.

It was near the close of the same day on which the events transpired at the cabin of One-Armed Alf, as narrated, that a little group of men were assembled on the banks of the river, near the aforesaid settlement, where they could command a view of the great lake, as it lay like a sea of molten silver, reflecting back the glorious light of the fast declining sun.

They were rough, bearded men, dressed in garbs in keeping with the border, and made of buck-skin and linsey-woolsey. In spite of this rough exterior, however, there was a free, honest expression of the countenance that told of the true goodness and great-heartedness of the inner man.

They were not armed, yet all evinced no little fear and anxiety in regard to the matter which we will let their own conversation reveal.

"If the reports that have reached us are true," said Jack Eller, a bluff, outspoken, odd war-dog of some sixty years, who had seen active service in the great struggle for American independence, "a messenger from one of the exposed p'ints will soon be jogging this way, with news that'll confirm the story. And I dare say our friend, One-Armed Alf, will not be slow in scenting out the trail of the accursed hounds, and give 'em a taste of Brandy-wine; and I also think that if thar war any foundation in the reports, Alf would have swung himself down here afore now."

"Circumstances may prevent, friend Eller," said a young man named Darcy Mayfield.

"Oh, I'll warrant he'll not stop for circumstances. He'll manage some way or other to warn us of impendin' danger as he has done in thar past. I know Alf, boys."

"In case of actual war he might take sides with our enemies, Jack," said a companion.

"Bah, you scamp! If it wer'n't you, Hugh Stoner, I'd hit you a diff for One-Armed Alf. No, sir'ree, Stoner; he's as true to us as the Muskegon's water is to its source. A bigger and more loyal heart never pounded mortal man's ribs. But if we are to have a war with the British and Injuns, they'll find that old Jack Eller's blood of seventy-six is just as wild and hot as ever, and the sword I won at Brandy-wine ready to be buckled on. Or, if it need be, I can shoulder a musket, and rattle my old bones over into Canada to the tune of Yankee

Doodle, with the blithesome step of twenty years."

"Hark!" suddenly cried young Horace Gaskell; "what was that?"

"What was what?" interrogated Jack Eller.

"That noise; did you not hear it?"

"No, Gaskell; I heard nothin'. My hearin' is the only faculty that ole time has dulled; otherwise I'm springy as a young rooster of twenty. But what did you hear, Horace?"

"A sound like the blast of a horn."

"I hope you're mistaken, Gaskell, for the sound of a horn at this time would only be a confirmation of the rumors of war, and—ah, harkee, lads, harkee! there goes it ag'in."

There was no mistaking the sound this time. All heard it distinctly. It was the far-off twang of a horn, borne faintly to their ears on the soft evening air. At first it appeared to come from the forest to the east of the village, but a repetition of the sound, which was more distinct than before, convinced them that it came from the lake to northward.

With a keen glance the little group swept the placid bosom of the lake, but not an object appeared upon it. There was, however, a headland on the opposite side of the river jutting out into the lake, which concealed a large portion of the eastern shore from view, and if the sound came from the lake at all, it must have come from behind this headland. That this was in fact the case, there was not a single doubt left in the minds of the bordermen when the horn again rung out, nearer and clearer than ever, and with such startling intonations as sent a thrill of terror through their forms.

Without a moment's hesitation old Jack Eller and Horace Gaskell sprung into a small canoe that lay upon the beach before them, and started across the river, to investigate the cause of the alarm, while the rest of the settlers hurried back to their cabins to put the village on its guard in case danger threatened them.

It required but a few minutes for Eller and young Gaskell to cross the river; and having landed and secured their canoe, they hurried around the point until they had gained an eminence from whence they could command an unobstructed view of the eastern shore of the lake as far as the eye could reach; and they had scarcely taken in the grand spectacle that was set before them when an exclamation from Gaskell drew Eller's attention to a strange sight upon the lake.

About a quarter of a league away to the northward, they beheld a tiny sail-boat coming down before the wind at a rapid pace, its speed being rapidly accelerated by a pair of oars that flashed in the setting sun, as they rose and fell like white, silvery wings. There was but a single occupant aboard the boat, and as near as they could judge he was a white man. But what appeared the most singular to our two friends was the presence of another craft of large dimensions, and flying the English colors at its mast-head, in hot pursuit of the little sail-boat. It was more than two miles away, yet our friends could see that it was a British brig carrying several guns and a crew quite adequate for its management.

"Ay! ay! that tells the story, Hor Gaskell," exclaimed Old Jack. "That p'izen English flag yonder, upon Michigan's fair bosom, is all the evidence I want of there being war between our nation and the English. And I dare say, yon little craft contains a friend coming to warn us of danger—ah! there goes that horn again—it came from the little fugitive, too. Let us make ourselves visible, Hor Gaskell, and it may give him courage."

So saying the two descended the headland from amid the shrubbery that crowned it, and stood upon the beach in plain view of both the little stranger and the English vessel, and waved their caps.

Their presence appeared to be discovered at once by the fugitive, for he immediately waved his cap in response to our friends' signal, then blew a shrill blast upon his horn.

The next instant our friends' attention was drawn to the English brig, by seeing a white cloud of smoke puff out from the prow of the vessel, then, as the sullen boom of a gun sent thunderous echoes athwart the vibrant air, a cannon ball came skimming along the surface of the lake and buried itself in the bank at their feet, dashing up a cloud of dust and dirt in their very faces.

"Fire and blazes!" roared old Jack Eller, in a sudden fit of rage and excitement; "that, Hor Gaskell, was intended as a salute for us. The bloody vampires! I'd give years of my life to board that ole scow at this minute with twelve of the boys that fit with me at Brandy-wine. Oh, Hor Gaskell, how we'd make the rантин' sinners blubber for mercy! But see—the little schooner is bearin' down to 'rds us now. Hurrah there, little boat," he yelled at the top of his lungs, "hurrah, ye little tiger, you'll soon be in port. By St. Peter, Horace, the little rip 's gainin' on that English lubber!"

"Hasn't the Englishman come to a dead stand?" asked young Gaskell.

"Believe it has, by Judas," responded Eller, shading his eyes with his open palm, and glancing steadily at the brig. "Oh, ho! I see into

it now, Hor Gaskell; the wind has gone down all of a suddint, leaving the big lubber in the lurch. You can see their clouting sails hang limp as dish-rags. Yah! ha! ha! The Englisher's become becalmed, or else is afraid to venter nearer to ole Jack Eller, the hero of Brandywine!"

There was some truth in Old Jack's words. The English vessel had come to a dead stand. She had not taken in her sails, which was evidence of having been becalmed. The little fugitive's sail, however, had been lowered, but it did not halt. The occupant plied the oars with renewed vigor, heading directly toward the two men on the bank. Five minutes more and the sharp prow of the curiously constructed bark touched the beach at their feet.

The occupant of the craft was a young man of about five and twenty years of age, and in general appearance he was a perfect type of noble manhood. His features were of an intellectual mold, and quite prepossessing. He was habited in the uniform of a captain of the United States Army, and his movements and bearing were those of a perfect soldier. In his belt he carried a brace of pistols, while at his side was suspended a coiled tin horn by means of a cord passing over his left shoulder.

As he arose from his seat in the boat, he saluted old Jack and young Gaskell, who returned the salutation. The young captain then stepped ashore, saying as he did so:

"Have I the honor and pleasure of meeting a couple of Point Michigan settlers?"

"You have *that*, stranger. This lad is Horace Gaskell and I am old Jack Eller."

"Are you Major Jack Eller?" queried the stranger.

"I sport that name, or used to, down East, soldier, having won it by hard knocks at Brandywine. Now what's your handle?"

"I am Philip St. John, captain of the Michigan Rangers, and have come to Point Michigan to warn you settlers of a great danger that is hourly gathering around your settlement."

"War, then, has been declared between our country and England, sure enough."

"Yes; but how did you hear of it?"

"We've only had floatin' rumors of it, Captain St. John," replied old Jack, familiarly; "but if you'd never come this way, captain, that renegade cruiser yonder 'd a' told the hull story."

"Yes; it is one of the proofs, friends," replied the young soldier, "that war between our country and England has been inaugurated. General Hull, with over two thousand men, invaded Canada nearly two weeks ago, but he has been compelled to withdraw his forces to Detroit, upon which the English army under General Brock is slowly but surely advancing. Mackinaw is hourly threatened, and God only knows how soon it may fall. The Indians have taken sides with the British, and the horrifying news of murder and rapine will soon convulse the land. Messengers have been dispatched to every garrison and settlement on the Michigan coast, and it was my especial duty to bring the sad news to Point Michigan, and I hope you will lose no time in benefiting yourselves by it."

"God almighty bless you, Captain Phil; ole Jack Eller is not the man to let danger come upon his people unprepared. The taste that I got of British blood at Brandywine is still strong in my old spirit, and that time has toughened till I'm one of the gamest ole roosters that ever flopped wing or stuck spur. With the weight of sixty years on my ole head, I could chaw a British dog up in the snap of yer eye; but I say, Cap. St. John, that English cruiser give you a close rub."

"Yes; and but for the intervention of Providence in laying the wind, I would have been compelled to quit the lake and take to the woods."

"That's a smackin' little boat you've got thar, captain, I swow. Beats any thing I ever see'd plow Michigan waters; does it belong to you, Cap?"

"I can't say that it does, friend Eller," replied young St. John. "When I first took to the lake, it was in an old Indian canoe, and it was not my intention to keep it longer than I had rested from hard journeying on foot. But, in coasting along the eastern shore of the lake, I suddenly espied that boat drifting about tenantless, at the will of the wind. Seeing it was supplied with mast and sail, and supposing that it had been deserted, I resolved to take possession of it, reef sail, and conclude my journey by water. I had no sooner taken possession of the little schooner and got her under way than I discovered a British brig bearing hard down upon the wind toward me. A race at once began, for I had determined to stick to the craft until the last, and for three long hours have we been running dead down on the wind."

While the young captain was narrating his adventure, Jack Eller took the opportunity to examine the little craft. It was about fifteen feet in length, sharp at stem and stern, and provided with a mainmast and sail. It was constructed upon an entirely new principle, and was a gem of workmanship, such as old Jack had never before seen. It was provided with a

double pair of oars and extra canvas, and taken altogether, it was a strange-looking craft, having an air of neatness and inviting comfort about it that puzzled Jack not a little as to who its previous owners had been, and why it had been left to go adrift on the broad waters of Michigan.

"By Judas!" he finally exclaimed, as a thought forced itself upon him; "I sw'ar, it looks like the Specter Skiff, captain!"

"The Specter Skiff?" repeated St. John; "what is the Specter Skiff?"

"Jist what its name implies. It's a strange little sail-boat that is seen upon the bosom of Michigan one minute, and the next it ar'n't seen—it is gone. When I fust see'd you comin' down the wind, I thought it war the Specter; but when I see'd a man into it instead of a woman, then I knowed it wer'n't the Spec."

"Then a woman *mans* the Specter Skiff, eh?"

"That's what some say that's been clus to her. They say she's a perfect angel, too, with big black eyes and long golden hair—a beauty and a nymph of the fust water. She's called the Maid of Michigan, and some think that she's the guardian angel of these waters, but it's only the superstitious. Men that fit at Brandywine, like me, can't be gulled in such a way. But say, Captain Philip, can't you spend the night at P'int Michigan?"

"I can not, Mr. Eller, I am sorry to say. I must lose no time in returning to Mackinaw. I see the wind is rising and shifting into the south. It's already in the south-south-east, and will soon be square around. Then I can elude that British cruiser. The sun is already down, and there will be no moon until late tonight. I would like to go up the Muskegon and see One-Armed Alf, the Giant Scout, if I only had the time. I am satisfied he has some news that would be worth carrying to the commandant, for I understood that he intended to gain an audience, at the risk of his life, to the great council of all the chiefs of the Peninsula tribes, and learn the result of the conference."

"When was the council to be held?"

"A day or two ago."

"Whar at?"

"At some point in the forest east of the Ottawa village."

"It's the fust I heard of it. I presume the council war to decide whether or not they all take sides with the English in the war."

"Yes; the English were to have their Indian agent, Ensign Mackclogan, there to—"

He did not finish the sentence. They were all standing with their backs to the lake, when a slight, unnatural sound, like the flap of a wing, caused them to turn suddenly toward the lake.

A cry of surprise burst from every lip.

"By the blood spilt at Brandywine, Captain St. John, your craft is gone! Heaven and mysteries! and it is the Specter Skiff, man! See! see!—don't you see the Maid of Michigan at the helm? Age of mystery!"

There was no denying old Jack's word. The little boat was gone from its moorings, and with crowded sails, was seen scudding across the lake in a westerly course. Sure enough at the helm stood the form of a young girl, whose white face was turned toward our friends, and wreathed in a pleasant smile; while her great mournful eyes shone with the soft light of childish innocence. Her head was surmounted with a coronet of tiny shells and sparkling jewels, and from beneath this a wealth of golden hair streamed in rippling masses about her white, snowy neck and shoulders. She stood half concealed behind the bellying sail, and before our friends could fully comprehend the state of things, the intervening distance blended the little sail-boat and its fair, strange occupant in one tiny white speck, as they sped onward over the broad bosom of Michigan, *pursued by the English cruiser!*

CHAPTER VI.

A STRANGE MISSIVE.

FOR a moment our three friends stood watching the receding Specter Skiff and the pursuing Englishman, completely dumfounded. A deep hush reigned, which was not broken until distance and the gathering shadows of evening had concealed the two boats from view; and then Captain St. John was the first to speak.

"That must be your Specter Skiff, Mr. Eller," he said.

"To be sure it is, captain. There is no other option needed," replied Eller.

"Then I have been riding in the Specter Skiff, but I would take my oath of it, that there was no other living creature besides myself aboard the boat when I was. The girl must have been concealed in that shrubbery there, and stole aboard the craft while we stood with our backs to the lake, conversing."

"But if she is a nymph or water-spirit, as the superstitious say she is, she could go and come unseen."

"She is no spirit, Mr. Eller, I assure you; but a real being in the flesh."

"It may be, captain; but, anyhow, we're not the jade a perfect angel for slap-up beauty and heart-smashin' loveliness!"

"She appeared extremely handsome, Jack,

and henceforth I shall have a longing desire to know more about this Maid of Michigan."

"Ay, ay, captain! I see you have had a deep emotion aroused in your breast by that strange girl; and I'll admit, if I wer'n't an ole, broken-down war-hoss, with a hide too thick for Cupid's darts, I'd prove a formidable rival of yours in courtin' that water-nymph. But then she's gone and neither of us may ever see her again; so, what's the use in tryin' to bottle sunshine and spend breath about her? and as yer canoe's gone, you mout as well step over to the P'int and spend the night. What say you, cap'n?"

"Impossible, Mr. Eller. I must make my way back to Mackinaw, quick as possible. It is true the loss of the boat will compel me to make the journey on foot."

"Not a bit of it, cap'n," replied old Jack; "come and go over to the P'int and you shall have the fastest hoss in ole Jack Eller's stable. Now come."

"I declare, Mr. Eller, I am half inclined to accept your kind offer," replied St. John.

"Then come along without further words." The young ranger turned and at once set off with Eller and young Gaskell toward the Point.

In a few minutes they crossed the headland and reached the point where the canoe was moored. In another minute they were aboard the craft moving across the river.

"How far is it from here to the cabin of the famous scout and spy, One-Armed Alf?" asked Captain St. John when the boat was fairly under way.

"Two or three leagues, or nighly onto that," replied old Jack. "Why so?"

"Since I will be compelled to reach Mackinaw by land, I may go past his cabin. His services are needed at Mackinaw."

"Wal, it's singular that he hasn't got wind of the war, and if he has, it's more singular that he don't let us know. Must be that sumthin's goin' wrong up that way. That 'tarnal Spirit of the Woods hangs around up that way and it may be he has sent Alf across the Jordan."

"That Spirit of the Woods is quite a farce, Eller—as much so as the Specter Skiff. I would just as soon lay the whole thing to some of your hunters as any one; or, to One-Armed Alf himself."

"Ho! ho! cap'n, you couldn't git that down me with a forty-foot pole. One-Armed Alf was never known to carry as much as a pop-gun, let alone a rifle. Why, he couldn't manage a rifle with one hand, for it takes a skillful man with two hands to shoot like that Spirit. Why, they say Alf never pulled a trigger in all his life. His hound and cane are his only companions when he's out, and the red-skins won't harm a hair of his head, for they think the Great Spirit made him without that arm that he might not lift it against him. Why, he's been known to keep and doctor a sick or wounded Injun a month, and then send him away with his best wishes, and that don't look as though he war an Injun-slayer. Besides, none but Ojibway warriors have ever been found with the bullet-hole of the avenger upon their breasts; the Ojibs appear to be his especial game. However, the Britishers may take a different view of One-Armed Alf's peaceful habits, and send him to Canaan's happy land. No, captain; the Spirit of the Woods is as tangled-up an affair as the Maid of Michigan, and, harkee, Captain Phil, ole Jack Eller's word for it, you'll find, some day, that the Spirit of the Woods and the Maid of Michigan are *one*!"

"What makes you believe so?"

"The very fact that wherever a victim of the avenger is found, it is not over ten miles from the coast; and now, mark you, St. John, we'll soon hear of an Ojibway Injun bein' found hereabouts, shot through the heart with a tiny bullet."

"It would probably be a good thing if every Indian on the Peninsula could be found in a like state, then the English would have no one to depend on in the coming struggle."

"Wal, if war we must have, ole Jack Eller will make his mark, as he did at Brandywine, now mind—but say, Gaskell, just hold up thar with yer paddle a little minute."

Horace Gaskell, who was paddling the canoe, at once complied with Eller's request, and the boat came to a stand. Both he and the young officer were about to inquire the cause of Eller's sudden request, when they saw his eyes fixed upon a solitary green leaf floating on the surface of the river.

Why such an insignificant object should hold the old borderman's attention so closely, completely puzzled his companions, and before either of them could make any inquiry into the matter, the leaf had floated within arm's length of the canoe, and the old man reached out and picked it up. He then examined it closely and carefully, and his companions saw his eyes dilate, his lips part and his breath come quicker and harder, as though some terrible emotion convulsed his whole frame.

"What now, Mr. Eller? what now?" questioned the young captain.

"What now?" the old frontiersman exclaimed, his face becoming set with a firm, rigid ex-

pression: "why, I have a message from One-Armed Alf."

"A message, did you say?"

"Yes, a message from the Giant Scout, and may God have mercy on the settlers of the Peninsula. There it is, captain—written upon an oak leaf. Look upon it—read it for yourself."

As he concluded, the old borderman drew from his pocket a small memoranda-book, which he opened, and then upon one of its white pages he laid the green oak leaf just plucked from the waves of the Muskegon.

Then Captain St. John read the startling message that caused a groan to escape from his lips

CHAPTER VII.

THE MESSAGE.

THIS strange message which old Jack Eller handed to Captain St. John to read, was indeed written upon an oak leaf, the letters having been cut or pricked with a sharp pointed instrument, and when laid upon the white page of Eller's memoranda, each letter showed plain and distinct in white with but little irregularities where the point of the instrument had crossed the fibrous veins of the leaf. It read:

"I am surrounded. Haste the news. Mackinaw to fall in two days! ALF"

This Captain St. John read aloud.

"That's what it says, cap'n," added old Jack.

"My God! then all will be lost!" cried St. John; "I can never reach the garrison in time to warn them of their danger, and they'll not be expecting an attack so soon. I hope this message may prove to be a mistake."

"Nay, nay, Cap," replied Eller, "One-Armed Alf is never mistaken in these matters. He alers makes sure before he speaks. His way of finding out facts is a mystery to me and every one else, but be that as it may, it's sure, every pop. This way of communicatin' by leaves carried down by the current, is not new with the scout. He does it whenever he wants to tell us how things are goin' and yit don't want to be seen in these diggin's. I dare say, that's a hundred leaves just like this one floatin' on the Muskegon at this minute. You see the object—if one don't reach the place, or should pass without being seen, mebbe another will. It's an original ijee with One-Armed Alf, and a good 'un too, for who, unless he war in the secret, would pay any attention to a few leaves floatin' on the bosom of the river that traverses a hundred miles of forest? Ay, Cap, a bigger and nobler heart never pounded human ribs than that of that identikul One-Armed Alf."

"But he must be in trouble himself, Eller, for he says he's surrounded," said Horace Gaskell. "He must be surrounded by savages."

"It must be so, Horace, and as men, we stand in duty bound to hasten at once to his assistance. If you can tarry, Captain St. John, until we can get the scout out of his trouble, I'll raise half a dozen men to escort you to Mackinaw, for it'll not be safe for you to start alone."

"I am much obliged to you for your kind consideration and promise, but, perhaps I am more able to make the journey alone than you are to spare the men from Point Michigan."

"Nay, nay, Cap, we'll have to pull up and strike out for Chicago or Detroit at once. We can make no defense here against the Indians now. If it wer'n't for that cussed British cruiser we could take to the lake and reach Chicago easily and in a little while. But, pull hard for shore, Gaskell, and let's make every minute count!"

Gaskell plied the paddle vigorously, and in a few minutes the opposite shore was reached. Having landed, the three proceeded to the quarters of Jack Eller, where the settlers were all summoned and the state of affairs made known.

For awhile excitement ran high, but when quiet was again restored, preparations were at once made to go to the assistance of One-Armed Alf.

Old Jack Eller, whose age and experience fitted him for the position, stood at the head of the military department of the little village. His judgment, in fact, on all points could be relied upon, despite his bluntness and recklessness of character. At heart he was an honest and straightforward man, and what was lacking in education was made up in instinct and years of experience.

From the settlers he selected four young men who readily assented to accompany him to the cabin of One-Armed Alf, and from thence to Mackinaw with Captain St. John, and who at once prepared themselves for the journey.

One of the four, whom Eller introduced to St. John as Darcy Mayfield, was a man about the captain's own age, and whose general appearance struck St. John as being decidedly remarkable. He possessed a form, noble and commanding, and features that were strong, open and manly in expression. His eyes of a dark blue, shone with the light of intelligence and honesty, and his mouth and fine-carved lips bore evidence of great firmness and decision of character. His hair was of a dark-brown, and strange as it may appear, was thickly sprinkled with threads of silver. His premature gray-

ness St. John knew was not the result of illness nor feeble health, for his *physique* was strong and robust. But there was a faint softness of his voice, a firm compression of the lips, and a strange, wild vacancy of the eye that told of an aching, troubled heart. Nevertheless, he was a man calculated to win friends at first sight, for there was that about his looks, address and deportment that not only invoked friendship and admiration, but a feeling of silent sympathy.

"It is the fact then, Captain St. John," Mayfield said, after being introduced, "that we are upon the eve of a terrible war?"

"Yes, such is the case, Mr. Mayfield, I regret to say; and there is no possible chance of evading it now."

"Have the armies of England and America met in battle yet?"

"Not that I know of. General Hull, however, began the invasion of Canada several days ago, and it may be that a hard battle has been fought between him and Proctor. Mackinaw, I just learned, is threatened, and should it fall, God only knows what will follow."

"Are there women and children at Mackinaw?" asked Darcy.

"Yes, there are over fifty women and children—officers' and soldiers' families."

"Have you relations there?"

"I have no relatives there, Mr. Mayfield, but—but—"

"I understand, captain, what you would say," interrupted Mayfield; "that tell-tale blush speaks plain as words. I pray Heaven, captain, that your life may not be blighted like mine has been by the ruthless hand of the savage. And as we are likely to be companions for awhile at least, let me tell you that I will show no Indian, especially an Ojibway, mercy, even after he is down. I hate them, curse them, worse than I hate a serpent!" and the man's eyes fairly blazed with the fire of indignation stirred within him. "Yes," he continued, "I hate them! They have made a perfect devil of me toward them, and I take more delight in slaying them than in any thing else on earth. I make it a point to hunt them down like deer, and even now I am impatient to be off upon their trail. I know it is a fearful passion for one to let remain in his breast; but I dare say, captain, it would be even so with you should you, when you return to Mackinaw, find that she, upon whom you have centered all your love and future happiness, had been cruelly murdered or carried away to a fate worse than death by the savages. Yes, I repeat it, captain, it would make a demon of you toward those accursed barbarians!"

Before Captain St. John could make reply Jack Eller made his appearance and announced all in readiness for immediate departure to the assistance of the Giant Scout. The captain had, however, heard enough to satisfy him of one thing Darcy Mayfield was the terrible avenger—the Spirit of the Woods.

As all were anxious to be off, the little party, including St. John, took their departure up the river. By this time it was dark, and in the forest the shadows were black and desolate; still, under the guidance of Darcy Mayfield, the little party moved on quite rapidly. They journeyed in silence, although it was all the guide could do to keep bluff old Jack Eller quiet, his blood having been aroused to a Brandywine heat.

As they neared the lonely cabin of the Giant Scout the gloom seemed to thicken around them. They stopped to listen for some sound that might aid in directing their course, but all was silent as the grave, save that weird, solemn moan of the wilderness and the gentle murmur of the Muskegon hard by. The deep hush of all animated nature was a foreboding element, full of meaning and significance to the trained borderman.

At length, when all was ready to resume the journey, Darcy Mayfield said:

"Let each one now observe the greatest precaution, for, if our friend Alf is in danger, the first indication of our approach may precipitate affairs."

"Ugh—humpf," ejaculated Old Jack, with closed lips.

The party moved on a short distance and again came to a halt by direction of their guide.

"How far are we from the scout's cabin?" asked one of the party, growing impatient.

"Hist!" commanded young Mayfield, and his form seemed to rise up in colossal proportions before those who now bent their eyes upon him through the darkness.

A deep silence reigned.

Then there is heard a sound like the snap of a dry twig close by, followed by the quick soft fluttering of feet and the rush of a body through a clump of adjacent undergrowth.

The figure before our friends had suddenly vanished—they saw that their guide, Darcy Mayfield, was gone!

"Pardition take the furies," blurted Old Jack Eller.

"Darcy has gone—shot away from us like a dart. What can he mean by such 'tarnal actions? I tell you, men, that boy acts like he war teetotally decomborborated sometimes."

"Like he was what?" asked Paul Engle.

"Why, you numbskull, don't you understand the English langwidge. It means mad—I believe Darcy goes mad whenever he gets into the atmosphere of an Ojibway."

"Yes; and I dare say," added Captain St. John, "that when you find out the real truth of the matter you'll find he is the reputed Spirit of the Woods."

"Oh, Judas!" exclaimed old Jack; "sich a thing is onpossible."

"Is the bore of his rifle large or small?" asked Captain St. John.

"Small, captain, small," said Paul Engle;

"there's not a rifle in the settlement that takes

as small a bullet as Darcy's."

"Then that is almost positive proof of his being the Spirit," said the captain.

"I can't b'lieve," said old Jack, "but—harkee!"

The sharp yet delicate intonation of a rifle came to the ears of the party. It came from the direction in which Mayfield had gone. All listened intently, but the report of the piece was succeeded by a profound silence.

For some time our friends stood wrapt in silence and doubt. They were afraid to move on lest Mayfield would be unable to find them again in the darkness.

Several minutes had been spent in speculating over their situation when they were suddenly startled by a light, soft tread which could be faintly heard approaching from the river quite rapidly.

With bated breath and eyes distended, our friends peered into the gloom, out of which they suddenly saw a dark figure—a mere density of shadows—float. It appeared to be crawling, or rather floating parallel with the earth's surface, and behind it could be seen the merest speck of dull, blue fire, which in no way could be accounted for, and which filled our friends with emotions of sudden fear and surprise.

The shadow paused when but a few paces from our friends, then followed a sound like an animal sniffing the air, and at the same time two dull, scintillating orbs of fire became visible near or against the shadow. But these lasted only for a moment. The shadow and orbs floated away into the gloom, but close behind them and bolt upright, stalked in human form, another dark shadow of Brobdingnagian proportions. But this shadow also passed away so quick that the silent watchers could scarcely believe that they had seen any thing at all.

"No, no, boys," said Jack Eller, after they had discussed the matter at length, "thar war nothing material in what we see'd. You must look into the matter in a philosophic light. That shadder war nothin' but an illusion of the eye; or it might have been a concentrated shadder."

"Who ever heard of a concentrated shadow?" questioned Paul Engle, scouting such an idea.

"Why, boy, if ye only knowed any thing you'd know thar are such shadders. I've see'd them standin' stock-still afore now in a dark, wooded valley; but the instant the sun or moon skipped out from behind a cloud, away'd go the shadder like a big giant."

"I can't indorse your philosophical explanation of what we have seen, Mr. Eller, although such a thing may be possible. But suppose we drop the subject and look after the object that brought us here, for time is precious, you know."

"Sartainly, sartainly, captain," replied old Jack; "let us be movin', come weal or woe."

They at once resumed their journey, moving slow and cautiously; but they had journeyed but a short way when they were again brought to a stand, this time by a sound like that which would be produced by some dying, strangling creature gasping for breath.

"What the mysteries can it be, anyhow?" asked old Jack Eller.

"It appears to be something or some one gasping for breath," replied St. John.

They listened and at once became convinced that the captain was right, though it might have been produced by an enemy trying to decoy them into an ambush. St. John, however, impatient to test the matter, drew his pistol and moved silently but briskly toward the sound. He soon issued into an open area, or glade, where the starlight reached the earth, unobstructed by foliage; and there, in the center of the opening, he saw an Indian warrior, reclining against a stone, his hands lying limp and helpless at his side and his chin drooping upon his naked breast. He was in the last throes of death, being totally unconscious, and a moment after our friends found him, there was a sudden convulsion of the body that jerked him almost to his feet. This was followed by a relaxation of the muscles, and the Indian sunk lifeless to the earth.

Captain St. John saw that he was neither scalped nor mutilated, but had come to his death from effects of a gun-shot. There was a tiny round bullet-hole on the naked breast in the region of the heart, and no sooner had old Jack discovered this, than he exclaimed:

"By Judas Iskarot, the Spirit of the Woods has laid it across that Ojibway!"

"Yes, or rather Darcy Mayfield," added St. John.

"Hist!--harkee, cap'n!" exclaimed old Jack. He, as well as his companions, had suddenly caught the sound of a heavy body thrashing through the undergrowth on the opposite side of the opening, but the sound soon became hushed for several moments, then was resumed again with more violence than before, and was accompanied by the thud and crunch of blows, and low, subdued groans.

The noise appeared to be approaching, and so our friends beat a hasty retreat to the shadows on the edge of the glade, and there paused.

The next instant they beheld two figures, locked in each other's embrace, come whirling in rapid evolutions from the darkness into the glade, engaged in a fierce and deadly struggle!

CHAPTER VIII.

ENTRAPPED.

OUR friends stood as though rooted to the spot, so sudden and startling had been the transition of events, and before they could determine who the two combatants were that came rolling in such rapid evolutions into the glade, a third figure shot suddenly into the opening from the deep, black shadows beyond. This was readily recognized as the form of a beast—a huge deerhound. The dog was immediately followed by the tall figure of a man whom all readily recognized as One-Armed Alf, the Silent Scout.

On the edge of the glade he paused, but it was only for a moment—until he had taken in the situation of the two struggling foes, then he strode across the glade to where they were engaged, and raising aloft his only weapon—his long cane—he dealt one of them a blow that at once terminated the conflict. Then with a silent exclamation of triumph and relief, the other arose to his feet, and turning to the Giant Scout, said, in a calm, matter-of-fact tone:

"Thanks, brother Alf. You came in time, for I must admit that I had my hands full—the knave was an exception to any thing I ever had a hold of, in point of strength."

"By Judas!" exclaimed old Jack Eller, no longer enabled to restrain his emotions, "it's One-Armed Alf and Darcy Mayfield! Howdy, Alf! Why, Darcy, you young rascal, what for did you give us the slip the way you did? Glad to meet you, Alf; this is Cap'n St. John, from Mackinaw; glad to find you with your hair on, Alf—get your message and hussled off up here like sixty. What's on the rampage by this time?"

"The woods are full of the heathen foe," replied the Giant Scout, in a low tone; "bloody times may now be expected. The spirit of evil and the Indians go hand in hand, and, too, the Spirit of the Wilderness is abroad."

"Ay, ay, friend Alfred," returned Eller, "you speak the truth. We see'd an Ojibway that the Spirit had slaved it to, not an hour ago. But how comes it that you're in trouble?"

"I know not unless the varlets mistrust that I am a friend to the whites."

"But you don't go cuttin' and slashin' and shootin' around like Mayfield here, so why should they trouble you?"

"They know my inability to handle fire-arms successfully," replied the scout, "but they begin to mistrust something of the real truth—that I am a scout and spy in the employ of the United States. But I care nothing for this—those lives at Mackinaw are what interest me now, for they're in imminent danger."

"Well, stranger," said St. John, addressing the scout, "we are now on our way to Mackinaw."

"But you have gone out of your course by coming this way."

"We came this way on purpose to help you out of your danger first."

"I am greatly obliged to you, friends, for your kind regards for me, but do not tarry here, I pray. If you go with me to my cabin, I will lock up and go with you to Mackinaw."

"That's the talk, friend Alf," said old Jack, "your assistance as a scout will be worth a dozen good men."

"Then follow me," replied the scout, and turning, he moved away into the woods. His faithful hound took the lead, while Eller and his party followed close behind the scout.

A few minutes' walk brought them to the door of the scout's cabin. All was darkness and silence within. One-Armed Alf gave the surrounding glade a hasty glance, then opened the door and entered the building, followed by his companions.

A light was soon struck, and as its rays dispelled the lurking shadows from the apartment, the scout glanced about the room as if looking for some one or something.

"Somethin' missin', Alf?" asked the inquisitive old Jack Eller.

"Yes; Ethiope, my black companion and housekeeper, is gone, and it seems a little strange that he should be away at this time. I hope he's not got into trouble."

"Ay, ay, you mean that black nigger? I remember him now," replied Eller.

"I can see no signs of violence about the place," said Darcy Mayfield.

"Harkee! There's a footstep at the door; it may be your nig."

Every eye was at once bent upon the door, when the hound of the scout was seen to leap into the room with apparent fright.

"What is it, Sultan—what is it?"

The dog uttered a low, plaintive whine and advancing to the door again, he elevated his nose, sniffed the air with apparent doubt, then bounded back to his master's side again.

Then a figure appeared in the doorway, that caused a convulsive movement of every form in the cabin. It was the figure of an Indian, painted and plumed for the war-path, with his shoulders enveloped in a red, flaming blanket.

A half-defiant smile rested upon the face of the savage as he ran his eyes about the room and scanned the faces of our friends. His presence seemed to enjoin silence upon every one present; and during the hush Captain St. John glanced toward Darcy Mayfield, and was surprised at the unearthly light of vengeance that blazed in his eyes. He saw his hand seek the knife at his girdle, and as the young man's breast swelled with the fearful emotions stirred within it, he—St. John—saw the murderous blade creep slowly from its sheath; but before it was entirely withdrawn, the fearful spell was broken—his deadly intentions arrested by One-Armed Alf, who stepped forward, and, confronting the Indian, said:

"Why is a war-chief of the Ojibways here, when his brothers are away, fighting the Yankees in Canada?"

"Bruders not all there. Lots in Michigan woods. Me here to talk with One Arm," replied the Indian, in a tone and language that convinced all present that he was not a genuine Indian, but a white man in disguise. But, with feigned ignorance of the fact, the Giant Scout replied:

"Come in then, and let me hear what you have to say."

The Indian advanced into the house, and, at a signal from the scout, his comrades fell back and seated themselves on the opposite side of the room. The Indian and One-Armed Alf remained standing.

"I am ready now to hear what the Ojibway chief has to say to me," the scout said.

"Does One Arm and his pale-face friends know there is war between our people?"

"We have heard it intimated, but have no positive proof of the fact; and sincerely hope that it is not so."

"It is so," replied the Indian, glancing from one to the other of his auditors to see the effect his words would have upon them, "and hundreds of Yankee scalps hang at Indian girdles."

"Do you know this to be a fact, Ojibway?"

"I do. Already great battles have been fought."

"Where at?"

"One at Mackinaw."

"And what was the result of the fight at Mackinaw?"

"Mackinaw was captured."

"Great Heaven! can this be possible?" cried Captain St. John, startin' up.

A grim smile of satisfaction and triumph passed over the face of the Indian as he replied:

"The young warrior is surprised at the news—so are his companions; but Long Run tells the truth; Mackinaw has fallen."

"Oh, God! let me out of this—let me go!" cried St. John, starting wildly toward the door.

"Hold a moment, young man, said One-Armed Alf, laying his hand on the young captain's shoulders; "wait, and we will go with you. The time has come when cool, calm consideration beforehand will be our only safeguard."

"It is hard—hard to do, Alf, when the lives of those we hold dear may hang upon the action of a moment," said the captain, resuming his seat.

Then One-Armed Alf turned to the Ojibway and continued:

"Let us hear what else Long Run has to communicate."

"I have but little more to say, for One Arm's mind is long and he can guess the rest. He knows that the great lakes were once the undisputed range of the red-man. But the pale-faces came in and drove him away and built up forts and villages; cut down our trees, and killed our game and our brothers. Now the red-man has dug up the hatchet. The pale-faces must all die, or flee from the hunting-grounds of the Indian. One Arm can not shoot, neither can he wield a tomahawk; but his skin is white, and his heart is too, and his scalp would count one in the eyes of the great Canada Father. The red-men would not take the scalp of one whom the Great Spirit made without an arm, as an example of his wrath and punishment upon all white men who raise their hands against the red-skin; but when the Indian hatchet, wet with pale-face blood, is raised, he spares none."

"I observe, Ojibway," said One-Armed Alf, leaning slightly upon his long, knotted cane, "that you have some secret motive in coming here—something besides your avowed friendship and kindness. In the first place I observe you are not an Indian, but a white man disguised, which misrepresentation leads me to mistrust you of some treachery."

A low, silent and devilish laugh escaped the disguised villain's lips, which was succeeded by the sound of footsteps without. Then our friends caught the glimpse of other figures outside of the door, and, a moment later, a dozen real Indian warriors filed into the room, their faces aglow with a subtle, malicious smile.

They paused and glanced around them with well feigned surprise; then, at a sign from the renegade, they all seated themselves upon the floor, facing the whites. The very countenance of the painted wretches was an index to the cunning treachery and murderous intent of their hearts; and the mocking sneer upon their faces, were intended to provoke the whites to some demonstration of violence. But the cool equanimity and dogmatic forbearance of One-Armed Alf overcame the spirit of resentment, and for the time being the storm was stayed. In fact, he went so far as to turn and glance at the savages with provoking coolness, at the same time saluting them with a friendly bow. But his glance was immediately transferred to his companions, who read a volume of meaning in it: "Boys, we're entrapped! But stand firm, and die like men!"

CHAPTER IX.

HAND TO HAND.

A DEEP and profound silence followed the bold intrusion of the red-skins into the cabin of One-Armed Alf; but it was a silence, which, when fully broken, would be by the cries of agony wrested from men in a terrible death-struggle.

Although the red-skins all came wrapped in blankets, and some of them smoking, in order to allay suspicion of their purposes, their treacherous intentions were too thinly disguised to escape the notice of the scout. He knew full well that they had murderous weapons concealed beneath their blankets, ready for instant use; and the superiority of their number, with the thought that others might be concealed outside, gave the scout much uneasiness, yet he permitted no look or word to betray his emotion of fear.

Long Run, as the renegade had called himself, glanced at each of the whites, as if to read their perturbation of mind, then said:

"Why are the pale-faces silent and amazed? Have they not looked upon Ojibway warriors before?"

"We have," replied One-Armed Alf, seeing that there was no evading the subject, "and we have looked upon more welcome visitors, I can assure you."

"A darned sight," added old Jack Eller, unable to control his tongue longer; "I've see'd lots han'somer niggers than you kit of red galoots, and I'd like to be knowin' wharefore ye're here."

"We have come for scalps, horses, pretty squaws and lots of things; and we'll have them too, unless you agree to take them all and leave the country of the red-man."

"Have we violated the confidence you intrusted in us in the past?" asked Captain St. John.

"No; but your great Father at Washington has declared war against our Canada Father, and we know you'll take sides with your people."

"Suppose, then, we agree to leave here, what assurance have we that you will not follow and shoot us when our backs are turned?"

"Then One Arm does not believe an Ojibway can tell the truth?" said Long Run.

"Yes; an Ojibway might, but a renegade like you is not to be believed."

A grim, Satanic smile flitted across the face of Long Run, and his eyes flashed a deadly revengeful look upon the undaunted scout.

A momentary silence followed the scout's retort, then the renegade said:

"It is no use for us to spend further words, One Arm. We are here for two things. One, to exact a promise that you will leave this country; another, for one person in your party."

As he spoke, the chief rose slowly to his feet.

"Which one of our party do you want?" asked the scout.

"That one," the renegade replied, pointing to Darcy Mayfield.

"What do you want him for—to eat?" asked old Jack, in a tone of provoking sarcasm.

"That's none of the old gray-beard's business," replied Long Run; "we want that man alive, if we can git him so, but if not, we will take him dead."

There was an involuntary commotion among our friends, and each eye sought the face of Darcy Mayfield, who stood unmoved by the demands of the renegade chief. He did, however, exchange glances with the Giant Scout, then both fixed a close, studying gaze upon Long Run's face, as if trying to penetrate his disguise of paint and feathers. While thus engaged old Jack Eller broke forth:

"I say, Long Run, you're a darned on'y knave, and if you want to stand erect here without a punctuated hide, you mus' talk more respect'ul to me, Jackson Eller; or I'll be cussed if I don't swamp ye, tooth and nail."

My blood's beginnin' to bile, and the heart's blood of a hundred Ingins won't satisfy me when I git set to goin' on't, now mind, ye ramin' niggers you."

Long Run pretended not to have heard the old borderman's words, but fixing his eyes upon the scout, asked:

"What does the scout of the pale-faces say? will he give up the young man, or will he not?"

"Long Run, do you take us for a pack of cowards? Do you suppose we will surrender one of our men to you? *Never!*"

"You must, or take the consequences."

"We'll take the consequences."

Long Run turned to his warriors, who had, all the while, maintained a stoical silence, and addressed a few words to them in the Ojibway tongue. Every warrior arose to his feet.

A deep hush fell upon the parties. Hands mechanically sought the weapons at the girdle. There was a swelling of the chest, a dull burning of the eye, and slow, labored breathing that told of desperate and deadly resolve within each man's breast. And now but a single word or movement was wanted to precipitate affairs. Every man was ready to fight to the death. Already the two lines of foes stood wavering in awful suspense—like the swaying of two great walls ere they lose their balance and fall.

Before the signal for the beginning of the conflict could be given by either party, however, the storm was stayed by a loud, gruff voice within the cabin door.

The terrible spell was broken, and every eye was bent upon the doorway.

Then, with a swaggering step, a white man, with a huge pack on his back, came dancing into the room on tiptoe. Calmly he placed his pack on the floor and seating himself upon it, crossed his legs, folded his arms over his breast, then, with apparent surprise, regarded the two lines of foes with a comical expression upon his face.

"By the fires of Popocattypetel!" he at length broke forth, "if this doesn't beat me, Jabez Muggins, the whisky dealer, all into a suds! Who'd a' ever thought of finding a dozen Ojib's in the cabin of One-Armed Alf, all standin' in a row like school-boys toeing a mark! And hyar's a hull kit of whites, all in a row, too! And sweet Moses and Canaan dear! What tigerish looks ye all have! Why, what's up, boys? Anything that Jabez Muggins, the life-givin', soul-ticklin' cockalorum of the Great Lakes, can have a finger in? Sneeze it out, One Arm; or *you*, you red skinflint, muddy chops, whar's the dif'rence to Jabez? An understandin's wanted, gents—must have it—will have it, or over goes creation. Come, whistle out your story, One Arm—gobble it out, red-skin, you lizard-wat-tled bung-nose of thunder."

The last words were directed to Long Run, who replied, disdainfully:

"Whisky-trader all tongue—big talk—no sense."

"Oh, git e-out with yer slip soft cackle. Tramp up and expostulate like a slick-tailed 'possum, or shed yer paint, and show yer color."

"You have come in on the eve of a desperate conflict, Muggins," said the scout.

"Oh, I did, hey? Sorry I disturbed ye, boys, but then I'll stand a wetter on it. That is, I'll treat all around and tickle yer tasters, and then I'll stand a chance to sell ye every drop of spasm-juice in ole 'Knowledge' here. Why, I'm an orful ole fool, chicks; but I don't keer if you'd shell out every dog-gone rinkum in your pockets for bottled joy. I'm not mis-erly—oh, no—but that's not filthy lucre outside of the earth to dash my modesty; so now, boys, jist wag paws over my keg and go in on a good ole drunk. I tell ye what, I've got a bunkumsquintum article here that will jist make you git up and tater—make ye love each other like all fire and blazes—say, won't you all have a snifter?"

"This, Muggins," said One-Armed Alf, "is no time to trifl, and you'll oblige me by departing at once, or remaining quiet."

"Bah, now! Lookee here, ole One Arm, if you think I've no right here, shell out yer dock-eyments."

The scoundrel's in league with the Indians," exclaimed Old Jack; "kill him!"

"Not so, ole bear, I'm n'utral, I are, upon principle; but, if I ever fite at all, it's on the side that's mos' likely to whoop, and so ye kin jist count me ag'in' ye if yer gorin' to have a leetle blood-spillin'."

"Shoot him! shoot the traitorous coward!" cried Old Jack, fierce with rage.

"I would kick him out of the cabin," said One-Armed Alf, "but such an insignificant creature doesn't deserve so much notice."

"Git e-out, now, ole Giant," exclaimed the trader; "by the smoke of Halifax, if some one'd boost me up, I'd give you a sweet scented diff' atwixt the squinters that'd onorganize yer calculations in the slapupest style, so I would—'whoop tee doodle, whoop tee doo'—say, larkies, can't I induce you to invest in a good, hearty spasm?"

Seeing that no one cared to invest, the trader arose and began waltzing, with a drunken swagger, up and down the room between the two

lines of foes, singing his favorite song as an accompaniment to his movements. His intrusion at the time had stayed the rising storm between the foes; still they maintained their hostile attitude, neither party yielding an inch. The savages stood with their arms folded beneath their blankets, and, no doubt, with their weapons in hand. As yet not one of the whites had drawn a weapon, but stood empty-handed. They did not wish to begin the affray, for the odds were against them, and there would be little hopes of victory. Some of them hoped that the intrusion of the whisky trader would terminate in conciliation. But there was little prospect of this, for the Indians maintained a silent and sullen demeanor, and kept their black, snakish eyes fixed upon them with an unwavering and dogged determination, that could not be broken by the apparent unguarded looks of the whites, nor the ludicrous antics of Jabez Muggins, the whisky-trader.

Seeing that the whites were not inclined to provoke a fight, Long Run asked:

"Do the whites still say they will take the consequence?"

"We do, most assuredly," responded One-Armed Alf.

"See here, my purty bobolinks," chimed in Muggins, "don't go to quarrelin' ag'in, but take a snifter of peace from my keg of glory. Be brothers, and I'll make money by it. This 'ere durned fightin' and scratchin' makes trade dull. But, if ye will fite, howsumever, I'll jis' hold my coon-skin over the light and let ye fite her out in the dark—extirminate each other, and then I'll come in fur the spiles of war, so I will, 'whoop tee doodle, whoop tee doo,'" and he whirled away to where the lamp, that lit up the room, was burning—took off his coon-skin cap and held it over the light, thereby shading it, and wrapping the whole room and its inmates in blinding darkness.

"Now," he said, "you see you are all one color, and so why not be brothers—ay! there you are ag'in," and he suddenly removed his cap from over the lamp, permitting the dazzling rays to flood the room again.

Both the Indians and the whites appeared to regard these queer movements of the whisky trader with no little curiosity; although the red skins still maintained their unflinching position and sullen, determined looks; and our friends held their guarded watch upon them, lest the trader was trying to divert their attention from his real friends, who would be enabled then to pounce upon and massacre all without resistance.

"Ho! ho! ho!" Muggins finally broke forth. "Why in the nation don't you fellers sail in on yer muscle and not stand in idleness, lookin' at each other like a passel of bloody gumps? And now, if enny of ye want to run, I'll shader the lamp ag'in, then ye kin shove out. You see, I'm inclined to be ginerous-hearted for sake of peace and trade—now!—scat!"

Again he shaded the lamp with his cap, enveloping the room in shadows.

Then there followed a sudden, vivid flash; the crack of a fire arm, succeeded by a death groan and the dull thump of a heavy body falling upon the floor. Again the cap was raised, and the light flared out, this time upon a terrible scene.

CHAPTER X.

THE MYSTERIOUS SHOT.

The scene upon which the whites and their red enemies gazed was that of a lifeless body lying upon the floor before them, still quivering in death's last agonies. It was the form of the renegade, Long Run. He had fallen forward upon his side, with his hands clasped over his breast, where a little stream of blood was welling from a tiny bullet-hole, and trickling down between his fingers. An expression of horrible agony was frozen upon his face, and his eyes stared open, wild and glassy.

Every savage and white man seemed petrified—bound to the spot by the frightful scene. The Indians stood mute with horror, their arms still folded beneath their blankets, and their eyes riveted with terror upon the body of their dead friend. One-Armed Alf still stood where he had for the last ten minutes, leaning upon his long cane, regarding the scene with surprise and astonishment; while his companions gazed with distended eyes, and faces marked with a strange fear, about the room, as if looking for the one that had fired the fatal shot. But he was not to be seen. Not a man in the cabin held a weapon in his hand; and yet the time that intervened between the report of the piece and the instant that the trader permitted the light to flood the room was but a moment, and had one of the whites fired the shot, he could not have concealed his weapon without being seen. Moreover, the report was that of a rifle, and such a weapon could not have been set aside or concealed in an instant, as might have been done with a pistol.

In view of these facts, it was plain enough that none of those in the cabin had fired the shot, and yet no one could have fired through the open door, for Long Run stood with his back toward the opening, and had been shot by a weapon in front of him.

Now arose the question, who was the unknown slayer?—who had fired the fatal shot?

The silence that followed the death of the renegade was broken by the whisky-trader, who suddenly exclaimed, in excessive terror:

"Lor' Harry, who shot, who shot, Heavens, oh! I didn't think my foolin' would result thusly. Oh, agony! that spirit I see'd—I did see it rise up in the middle of the floor—it war the Spirit of the Woods, and it war he that plumped Long Run. Oh! Je-rusalem, let me outen this—quick! or I'll faint!"

He made a dash for the door, but an Indian intercepted him on the threshold.

"Let the kitter gol!" yelled old Jack Eller, advancing toward the Indian; "let the idiot go, and git out of here yerselfs, ye red bloodhounds of sin, you! Take this putrid carcass of yer master, and git, or I'll—"

He did not finish the sentence. An Indian sprang across the room, and seizing him, aimed a deadly blow at his head. The old borderman, however, retained much of his youthful activity, and dodging the blow, he grappled with the red-skin in a hand-to-hand encounter.

Then arose a wild, fearful yell within the cabin. The two lines of foes seemed to dissolve instantly into one, as they closed in deadly combat. At the very beginning of the affray, the table upon which the lamp sat was overturned and they fought in partial darkness. The crack, crack of pistols; the dull, crunching blows of fists and tomahawks; the thump of falling bodies, mingled with yells, execrations and cries of agony, made the forest ring with wild, horrible intonations.

To add to the dangers and terrors of the moment, the overturned lamp set a pallet of leaves and reeds on fire, and the red flames flared out and crept up the wall like a serpent, filling the room with thick, fetid smoke and stifling heat.

This new enemy strikes a new fear to the hearts of the combatants. There is a lull in the conflict. They are breathing hard with suffocation. They rush toward the door for egress and the open air, but they find it is closed and barred. They tear at the fastenings like madmen, but they can not open it. It is fast. Some one had shut them in with the hissing, crackling flames. They turn—they glare at each other like men driven to desperation, then they close again in conflict; but their efforts are weak—their struggles are feeble, for they are the struggles of suffocating—dying men!

CHAPTER XI.

OUT OF THE INFERO.

It was on the morning following the night of the events just narrated. The sun had just risen and was shooting his fiery beams across lake and woodland. The birds were singing their morning carol as they did of yore; and the wildwood was vocal with that strange, monotonous voice of nature, when the tall, gaunt figure of a man emerged from the dense forest surrounding the cabin of One-Armed Alf, the Giant Scout. I say surrounding the cabin, but this is not exactly the case, for there was nothing but a heap of ashes and smoldering embers where once the cabin stood.

The figure was that of One-Armed Alf himself. His faithful hound trudged at his heels. Both had escaped from that fearful ordeal in the cabin the night before. There was a look of sadness and regret upon the face of both dog and master as they stopped and regarded the ruins of their home, from the ashes of which little jets of blue flame were spurting out here and there, and above which the blackened and charred remains of a number of human skeletons lay revealed in all their repulsive ghastliness.

As he stood leaning upon his long knotted cane, sad, bitter thoughts passed in review before the scout's mind. Thoughts of his past life came trooping up before him as if to open anew the wounds of a broken heart. But, gradually, these were dismissed, and he came down to that part of his past life that extended no further back than the evening before, when, with his friends, he stood face to face with Long Run's minions, and when, side by side with them, he fought amid burning flame and stifling smoke. And now came up in his mind that hell of fire and death last night?

As if in partial answer to his question, a footstep sounded behind him, and turning, he beheld a human figure with tattered and torn garments, bruised, blackened and bleeding face, and with hair and whiskers singed to a crisp, emerge from the undergrowth and approach him.

"Hullo, friend Alf," the distressed man exclaimed, "thank God, you too escaped that furnace of fire and death."

But for the voice, One-Armed Alf would not have recognized the man; old Jack Eller, the hero of Brandywine.

"Heaven be thanked, Jack!" cried the scout, grasping the old borderman's hand: "safe, thank God! but I see you bear many painful proofs of last night's awful conflict."

"Yes, friend Alfred," replied Eller, "I came mortal nigh roasting alive in that oven of fire. But I got out, and God only knows how I done

it. My brain was afire, and when I got out and into the bushes I must 'a' fell unconscious, for not until half an hour ago did I know that ole Jack Eller had ever existed, or fit at Brandywine. Heavens and earth, Alf! That fight beat any thing on record—ole Brandywine was nowhere beside it; and ah's me, Alf! I reckon you and me are all that escaped that orful death. Poor Darcy! poor Darcy!"

"I have not seen any of the other boys," replied the scout, "but I do see a number of charred skeletons in the ashes yonder, and their presence there makes me think that you and I are all that escaped."

"But how did you git out, Alf?"

"I scarcely know. When the door was burst open and I rushed out into the open air nearer dead than alive, I thought I saw other human figures emerge from the doorway amid that great tongue of red, hissing, crackling flame, that sucked out from the pent-up oven of fire within. But I must have been mistaken; it must have been the illusion of a wild hope."

"Ah me! ah me!" groaned old Jack, "I tell you it's awful, Alf, to think of the horrible death of those brave boys. There was Cap'n St. John, and Darcy Mayfield, and Engle, and Tucker, and Norman, and that infernal whisky-trader—all must have been roasted to death."

"Not all, old Jack," said a voice from the depth of the thicket behind them.

"Glory! Glory!" shouted old Jack, "it's the cap'n's voice; hurrah!"

Then from the thicket Captain Philip St. John came hobbling out, burned and bruised, and haggard.

"Again thank God!" exclaimed One-Armed Alf. "I hope, captain, that you can tell us where the other boys are."

"I can not," the captain replied, glancing with a sigh toward those ghastly bones protruding from the ashes of the burned hut. "I saw Engle and Norman fall, either under savage blows or with suffocation—I was too near dead myself to tell which. At this time a rush was made for the open door, and I was carried out by the mad, rushing throng. In the thicket there I fell, and there I lay until the sound of your voices awoke me from my stupefaction."

"Oh, it was a terrible affair, St. John!" exclaimed the scout; "and it is but the beginning of this fearful war."

"I am afraid it will—"

"Harkee, Eller, harkee!" suddenly exclaimed the scout, fixing his gaze upon his hound. The animal had pricked up his ears, and frisking about, sniffed the air as if with alarm.

"What's it mean, Alf?"

"There's something about; Sultan's instinct is never at fault."

"Perhaps it 'ud be well to withdraw into the thicket."

"Wait a moment," said the Giant Scout, and turning, he addressed a few words to his dog, which immediately bounded away into the undergrowth surrounding the spot.

The animal was not gone a minute when he entered the opening again on the opposite side; and immediately after his appearance the bushes were parted near where he had debouched into the opening, and a dark face peered from the shadows of the undergrowth into the clearing.

"An Ojibway, by Judas!" exclaimed old Jack, a little nervously.

Before either of his companions could reply, a figure came bounding from the undergrowth, where the face had appeared, and gliding across the opening, approached our three friends.

It was not an Indian, but Ethiope, the African housekeeper and companion of One-Armed Alf.

"Oh, de good Lor' golly salvation to ole sweet Moses, Ma's Alf!" the negro cried, running up and seizing his master's hand.

"Why, Ethiope, your coming is like one from the grave! Where have you been?" asked the scout.

"Lor' only knows, Ma's Alf. Thought I war dead last night a hundred times; and den when I see'd de cabin all afire I says, 'Ethiope, Ma's Alf done gone dis time, suah.' Ho, de good Lor' jingoes, but I's a happy chile, now, I is. Good Lor', Ma's Alf, if I'd been killed by de bloody Ingings, den you'd had nobody to wash your victuals and cook your clothes; no, sah!" and the negro concluded by executing a leap into the air and bringing up with hand-springs that completely astonished old Jack and the captain.

"Well, now tell me where you've been all this time, Ethiope?" said the scout.

"Bin, Ma's Alf? Why, golly snickers, I'se been all over de peninsoola ob Michigan, and jis' as true as I'se a born nigger, I see'd a hundred million Ingings, and every one ob de dirty red niggers chased me like goss, dey did. But whe-wh! dis chile run so fast dat I jis' left eberry Inging standing chock-still. But, oh, good Lor', ma's, I nighly forgot to tell you de wu'st ob it!"

"Well, what is it, Ethiope?"

"I see'd de Spirit ob de Wilderness, as suah as I'se a living nigger boy; but dat's not de wu'st ob it, Ma's Alf."

"Well, what is the worst?"

"Mackinaw has fallen."

"Do you know this to be a fact?" asked One-Armed Alf, while Captain St. John groaned in spirit.

"Yes, ma's, it am de awful, solemn troof, as suah as dar's a heaven."

"How did you obtain the news?" asked Captain St. John.

"Wal, I war a-scoutin' around last night up north 'bout twenty miles, when all ter once I runs kerchunk up against a white chap in de dark. De fellah war runnin' like blazes dis way when we run togedder. Down went de fellah, and if ye b'lieve it, down went dis niger keslap on his back. Up jumped de fellah, and den up jumped de nigger, and den hot words passed, and I war gwine to eat de fellah, when he caved in, and we shuck hands and 'pollygized 'bout de darkness. Den he told me why he run so fast. Said Mackinaw war kap-tered, and dat he war gwine to P'int Michigan for help."

"For help?—what did he want help for?" questioned Captain St. John.

"He said dat several ob de weemen and childring had 'scaped from de garrison and was flying southward thro' de woods for safety, but de Ingings and Britishers got on dar track, and follered dem up and obertake dem, and surround dem in de ole French fort. He said dey could hold out a day or two 'g'in de varmints thar, and so dey send dat man after he'p. But he war so nigh tuckered out dat he couldn't stand still, and so dis nigger chile jist h'isted sail and cut dirt fer dis place, and here I is, and dat's what's de matter; and for de love's sake, fellahs, hurry up and help 'em thar poor fugitives."

"Did the man tell you who had command of the party of fugitives?"

"Said they hab a good guide—a friendly Inging dat he called Malagua."

"I know Malagua, but he cannot always be trusted. But, boys, I'm off for the old French fort. Who goes with me?" asked St. John.

"I'm with you, St. John, till the last," said One-Armed Alf.

"And here, too, cap'n," added old Jack Eller, "if this nigger will run on down to the Point and let the folks know what happened here last night, and who are alive and who are missing."

"I'll do it, old hoss, so I will," said Ethiope.

"All right then, cap'n; heave ahead and let's peg it up thar in a jiffy's time."

One-Armed Alf made no reply, but, turning his face northward set off at a rapid walk, followed by St. John and Eller. The negro turned and bent his steps toward Point Michigan.

Scarcely was the last one of the four lost in the depths of the woods, ere a low, quavering cry, like that of a bird, rung softly through the forest, and was immediately answered from different directions by the cries of mocking-birds.

Then forth from the forest shadows came a tall, painted Ojibway warrior into the opening where the scout's cabin had once stood. He gave a quick, furtive glance around him, permitting his baleful eyes to rest a moment upon the ghastly skeletons half-protruding from the smoldering ruins, then stole softly across the glade and plunged into the woods, directly upon the trail of One-Armed Alf and his two companions.

CHAPTER XII.

LOST ON THE LAKE.

WE will now, for a while, change the scene of our story toward the eastern shore of Lake Michigan.

The time is early morn, and the dew upon the leaves and grass deaden the footfalls of the stately buck and skulking wolf, as they start from their coverts at the approach of five men making their way westward toward the lake. Two of them were Indians and three were white men. But one of the latter was a captive, for his hands were bound at his back, and he was driven forward in advance with a cocked pistol at his head.

They were journeying rapidly, yet their fatigued looks and shuffling, wearied gait, told that they had journeyed long.

The prisoner was a young man of noble form, though his handsome face wore a sad, dejected look. His clothes were tattered and torn, and his hands and face were bruised and lacerated, and covered with blood. But, despite all this, we can recognize him. It is Darcy Mayfield, the young hunter of Point Michigan, whom his friends supposed had perished in the fiery element that lapped up the cabin of One-Armed Alf, the night before.

The two white captors were Englishmen, judging from their general appearance, and the fact of their being in friendship with the Indians, who were Ojibways, and whose garments and faces showed signs of a recent encounter with enemies.

A fear of being pursued by foes seemed to be the incentive to the great haste of the party, for now and then the Englishmen glanced uneasily back over their shoulders, then urged their captives forward with oaths and threats. The Indians, however, were more careful about

manifesting evidence of fear, and kept steadily on, trusting to the eye for dangers before them, and to the ear for the approach of dangers behind.

Had Darcy Mayfield's friends known that he had escaped death at the scout's cabin, a fearful load would have been lifted from their hearts. On the other hand, had Darcy known that his friends were alive, he would have entertained some hopes of escape from his captors. But, as it was, he believed that he was the only one who had escaped from that terrible fire and conflict, to drag out a miserable term in English prisons, or suffer a fearful death at the stake.

The party journeyed on speedily as possible, never halting for a moment. Briers and brush were no obstacles in their way; but on, over hill and valley, they journeyed, until at last the broad expanse of Michigan was unfolded to their view.

Upon a bold eminence they came to a halt and swept the waters with an eagle-like glance, as though they were looking for a sail. But not an object appeared upon the bosom of the lake. Not satisfied with this observation, one of the Englishmen, named Kruler, climbed into the top of a tall tree, from whence he could command a broader view of the lake on all sides.

After he had scanned the waters again and again, he called out to his friends below.

"I say, Belden, that cruiser is not to be seen inside of twenty miles."

"That's thundering curious," replied Belden, "when Pellington promised us faithfully that he would keep in sight of this point until we returned, or at least, until to-night. Perhaps some Yankee vessel has lured the Scorpion off on a chase?"

"It may be possible, Belden," replied Kruler, from the tree-top, "but I see something now that looks like the sail of a little sloop or skiff, lying close inshore about half a league to the northward of us."

"What's its colors?"

"It flies none; however, I am inclined to think that the Scorpion has been called away, and has left men and a boat to bring us off in case we came around with our game."

Belden glanced at Darcy Mayfield to see how Kruler's remarks would be taken. But, if he comprehended their meaning at all, Darcy manifested no surprise whatever. He was fully satisfied, from the fact of Long Run demanding his surrender the night before at the scout's cabin, that his capture was made in pursuance of some deep and wicked plot, with which the war had nothing to do, more than to afford the scheming enemy a chance to carry out their plans.

Seeing that Darcy took no notice of the lookout's remarks, Belden replied:

"Then you can't make out the sail under the shadow of the bank, eh, Kruler?"

"No; I can see no one aboard of it; besides, it flies no colors. It appears to have but a single sail. It's only a small concern—just a good-sized skiff. And, by our good king George, I believe the thing is not only empty, but adrift at the will of the wind."

"If that's the case, and our cruiser, the Scorpion, is gone, we can take that truant craft and pull for Mackinaw like sin."

"I presume that will be our best way," responded Kruler, descending from the tree-top; "and the sooner we are on our way, the better it will probably be for us."

A smile of disdain curled the lip of the captive. He saw that the cowardly fears of the Englishmen were growing upon them, and he desired that they shou'd know the utter contempt he felt toward them, notwithstanding he was totally in their power.

Kruler led the way down toward the lake until the shore was reached; then they turned and proceeded around toward the little sail-boat.

They soon came in sight of the craft, which was lying close against the bank; but, to their surprise, they found its sail had been lowered and taken entirely away since Kruler had disengaged it from the tree-top.

Footsteps were found upon the beach that evidently had turned into the forest, and so the two Ojibways were at once dispatched upon the trail of the unknown in hopes of recovering the sail, for they supposed the owner of the craft, whoever he was, had gone ashore to either hunt or scout, and would not, in all probability, be back soon, else he would not have unrigged his sail.

The moments spent in waiting the return of the Indians were moments of extreme anxiety and fear to the two Englishmen, but the redskins finally came back and reported that the trail of the unknown could not be followed without great pains and loss of time which might result fatally to their success.

"Well," said Kruler, "we'll charter the craft anyhow, and trust to the oars with which I see it is provided."

"Sell white brudder blanket—it make good sail for boat," said one of the Indians, removing his blanket from his shoulders.

"Good for you, Injin," replied Kruler. "I'd

never thought of such a resort. I'll take your blanket, and we'll be off. We've already spent too much time here now."

The service of the two Indians having been secured only to this point, they were dismissed from further duty, and permitted to go where their pleasure dictated, while Kruler and Belden took the captive aboard the little boat and at once pushed out into the lake, taking a northward course.

Darcy Mayfield did not regret this change in mode of travel, for two reasons. One was of his being almost exhausted, and the other, was the hope of being released by friends. It is true, the water left no trail, but out on the open lake they would not be apt to escape the eyes of some friendly scout who might bring him assistance. He also entertained a hope that the owner of the craft might be a friend, and finding his boat gone, would make such search for it as might lead to a discovery of his helpless situation.

He made a close examination of the boat, and was not a little surprised at the taste and mechanical skill displayed in its construction. It was sharp at stem and stern, and was made on a plan entirely different from any thing he had ever seen, carrying a heavy ballast, yet requiring no more effort to propel it than an ordinary skiff. Besides it was rigged for a considerable breadth of sail. There was an air of neatness and inviting comfort about it, the thwarts being cushioned with furs, and the bottom covered with dried moss and layers of reeds.

Kruler took the oars while Belden guarded the prisoner, in the stern, and in this manner they glided softly over the bosom of the lake. The wind was blowing directly from the east and quartering against them. This had a natural tendency to bear them gradually out further and further from shore, making the labor at the oars a little more toilsome than they had at first calculated upon. Knowing, however, that they were in no danger they determined to stick to the craft and lighten the labor by taking turns at the oars.

The journey before them would, nothing to delay them, occupy at least two days. They had a small supply of dried venison which they could make out with, for now that they were upon the lake, it would be dangerous to venture ashore short of their destination.

They journeyed on in comparative silence, keeping a constant watch on all sides, for they were aware of there being American as well as English vessels cruising upon the lakes.

The day wore gradually away, and by the time the sun had set, the voyagers found that they had permitted themselves to drift out from land until they were now surrounded by one vast, immeasurable ocean of water, and would have nothing but the stars to guide their course.

The wind had shifted around, about sunset, to the southward, and by improvising a sail out of the Indian blanket, they were enabled to dispense with the oars, save to keep the head to the proper course.

To their disappointment, however, the night closed in with a heavy fog, enveloping the lake and shutting out every ray of light. This made the gloom almost impenetrable, and to add to the misfortunes of the party, the wind went down, and within two hours after dark they found themselves becalmed unknown leagues from shore, and surrounded by a wall of darkness. This necessitated recourse to the oars again, but this mode of voyaging soon became too laborious for the Englishmen to keep it up: especially, when they suddenly discovered that they were bewildered—actually lost upon the night-enshrouded bosom of Lake Michigan.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PHANTOM OF THE BOAT.

"Lost, by heavens!" exclaimed Kruler.

"Yes, and the first thing we know," replied Belden, "some Yankee craft will be afoul of us."

Darcy Mayfield could not repress a smile at the Englishmen's fears and stupidity, but the darkness concealed his emotions from his captors. He occupied a position where he could recline and sleep if he desired so to do; although he was bound hand and foot, and, to prevent escape from the boat, the ends of his thongs were attached to the thwarts.

Kruler plied the oars vigorously, ever and anon stopping to take breath and give expression to his feelings in a string of oaths, heaped upon their own heads for having taken to the water, and then permitted themselves to become lost.

"There's no telling," he said, "whether we will come up at Mackinaw or Fort Chicago if we keep on in this blind way. It's true we hadn't ought to lay idle, but I'm of the opinion we'd better lay still and wait for daylight."

"I should favor the idea, Kruler," replied Belden, "but for one thing: when morning dawns we may find ourselves a prize to some Yankee. To lose our prisoner now would be to lose a fortune; but I'll swear I can't see how we can well help our situation—hullo! the boat rocks! the wind must be rising."

"Not a bit of it, Belden. It was only our

game tossing about in a troubled sleep," and Kruler laughed heartily at his own conceit, as most Englishmen will do.

Belden felt of the prisoner's bonds to see if they were all right, and finding they were, both the Englishmen settled down midships into a position of ease and relapsed into silence to await the coming of morning, or such an event as would determine their course.

Despite the pain induced by the ligatures around his ankles and arms, and the agonizing thought of an unknown fate, Darcy Mayfield sunk into a refreshing sleep. The perils and exposures of the previous night had about exhausted his strength and power of endurance, and nature sought rest and relief in slumber.

He slept soundly after he had become accustomed to his position; but far in the silent depths of night he was suddenly awoke from his dreams by a sound like the crack of a pistol. In dreams he had been fighting over the battle at the cabin of One-Armed Alf, and when startled from his slumber by the sharp report, he arose to a sitting posture and gazed around him into the mist and gloom that enshrouded the lake. It was several moments before he could recall his situation, and when he did, he found all silent as the grave, save the winnowing of nocturnal wings along the unruffled surface of the lake.

He could just see the dark outlines of his two captors reclining in the seat in front, apparently asleep; and this discovery suggested the idea of escape, and he at once threw all his strength into the effort to free himself. But he found that his feeble strength could have no effect upon the cords that bound his wrists to his back and he was forced to give up all hopes of escape. Then again he sunk down with despondency and despair, and soon fell into a restless sleep that was filled with visions of demons, conflicts and tortures that were almost as agonizing as reality itself. At length, however, he succeeded in shaking off this horrible nightmare and in rising to a sitting posture.

Then the first thing of which he became conscious was of a light breeze fanning his feverish brow, and a slight motion of the boat led to the discovery that it was under way and moving at a rapid pace. He now glanced along the craft and was greatly surprised to see that his captors still maintained their silent, inert attitude, apparently sound asleep; but his surprise was turned into speechless wonder and amazement when the light flap of something like that of a great wing led to the discovery that a white sail was attached to the mast and bellying to the wind, while just beyond this he could discern the dim outline of a female figure, robed in misty white, standing erect in the prow of the boat.

The helpless man bit his lip to assure himself that he was not dreaming still, and then he strained his eyes through the gloom and mist in vain endeavors to discover whether or not the white-robed figure was a vision or an actual being. But the longer he gazed, the further away the figure appeared to float, and at length his eyes became so blurred with their staring gaze that the form faded altogether from his sight.

A horrible fear now rose in the young man's mind—a fear that his brain was wandering—that all he had seen was but the illusion of his failing senses. But this absurdity was suddenly discarded when he saw that strange female again appear from behind the low sail and approach him with soft footsteps.

In breathless suspense Darcy Mayfield lay, a strange sense of fear stealing over him.

He sees the form pass the sail and the sleeping captors—come on and pause directly by his side. Then he sees it stoop over him, and he feels the cold blade of a knife pass between his fettered wrists. He feels the pressure of the keen edge upon his bonds; they are cut asunder—he is free!

The young man knew that there was human agency in all these strange proceedings, and as soon as the numbness had passed from his limbs, and he was enabled to stand, he arose to his feet, and was about to address his strange, unknown deliverer, when, to his amazement and horror, he saw that she had vanished.

"Ah! by Heaven!" Darcy exclaimed, as a ray of light burst suddenly upon his bewildered mind. "I see into it now; we are aboard that haunted skiff, the home of the Maid of Michigan!"

"But why were Kruler and Bender so silent?" Darcy asked himself this question; then a shudder of terror passed through his frame like that which we all feel when we enter suddenly into the presence of Death.

CHAPTER XIV.

BELEAGURED.

THE sun was scarcely down when a little band of white fugitives debouched from the forest into an open glade on the summit of a bold ridge some twenty miles south of Mackinaw. There were about twenty persons in the party, and half of these were women and children. All were nearly exhausted with travel, their tattered garments, their pale and bleeding faces, torn with briers and brush, and their

poor, shoeless, bruised feet, bearing strong evidence of their journey having been a hard and rapid one. And so it had been. They were relatives of the American soldiers stationed at Mackinaw, where they had been staying, but the day before we introduce them, the garrison had fallen into the hands of the enemy, and they, the fugitives, having escaped, were fleeing toward Detroit.

A murmur of thanks escaped the lips of some of the tired and terrified women as they entered the opening, for they had been cheered up for long hours with the bright promise of rest and a haven of temporary safety at this point.

The object which attracted them there was an old building, or fort, which had been erected by the French soldiery during the first conquests of America by that nation. The outer walls bore an ancient and ruinous appearance, while the very air seemed rife with the spirit of decay and desolation. Yet despite all this, the old defense was a pleasant and welcome object to the eyes and hearts of the fugitives.

The entrance to the fort was by way of a gate, which had long since rotted from its hinges, and now lay, damp and moldy, in the entrance through which the fugitives passed to the interior. Here they found another scene of desolation and desolation. In one side of the enclosure stood a row of tumble-down log cabins, overgrown with moss and ivy. The ground was covered with a dense growth of tall grass, while moss and parasites crept up and over the crumbling stone walls which composed the main defense of the fort.

Two of the male fugitives set about preparing one of the old cabins for the night bivouac. They were assisted by two bright-eyed girls of about eighteen summers, and upon whose gay young spirits the dangers and hardships of the day's journey made little impression.

Hellice Arvine, the older of the two, was a dark-eyed damsel, whose every form and feature were grace and beauty, and whose movements were as light as the fawn's. Full of life and of a naturally kind and vivacious spirit, she was a source of joy and blithesome gayety even upon such a journey. During the day she had shown more true heroism than some of the stronger sex. She was fully aware of the dangers that menaced them, yet she never gave up to her fears, but with exemplary coolness and decision spoke words of cheer to her companions, and assisted those who were encumbered with little children. Although an orphan, without brothers or sisters, Hellice had something in the world to live for, and a remembrance of the fact had much to do in keeping up her young spirits. She loved Captain Philip St. John, and to him had she plighted her love. Still she had her fears resting upon her young heart. Her lover had gone to Point Michigan, a short time before the attack on Mackinaw, and she was afraid that danger would befall him, or, if he escaped, would fail to hear of her own flight in time to assist her to a point of safety.

Margery Bliss, Miss Arvine's companion, was a year younger than Hellice, and equally as handsome, although her beauty was of a different type. She was loved and admired by all who met her, as well for her beauty as for her meek and gentle modesty. Her nervous temperament and delicate organization were not intended to withstand enduring hardships and constant fears; still she had borne up well under the day's flight, and now, with light footstep and deft fingers, she assisted Hellice and the men to arrange things for the night's encampment.

Colonel Robert Bliss, Margery's father, assumed command of the little party of fugitives, and being a great, kind-hearted man, whose life had been spent upon the frontier, where he had received his title of colonel as the commander of a regiment of militia, all the fugitives gladly acceded to his superior judgment and knowledge. It is true they had a guide to whom the colonel yielded the precedence of experience in woodcraft and Indian cunning. This person was an Indian, who had been sent back an hour or so before they reached the fort, to ascertain whether or not they were being followed by enemies.

It did not require many minutes to put the place in the best shape possible for a temporary defense; but when this was accomplished it was found that another and still greater defense was wanted. This was a defense against hunger—food. They had had but little provision that day, and now, as the stimulus of mental excitement began to wear away, hunger began to be felt, especially by the children.

But there was no help for them now. The sun was already down, and there would be no possible chance of procuring game, even if some one ventured out in quest of it. There was water in abundance within the fort to slake their burning thirst. It welled cool and clear from beneath a great rock near the center of the fort, and this spring had probably been the main feature that led to the erection of the fort there.

Darkness soon set in; then a fire was struck to dispel the chill, damp atmosphere from the moldy old cabin. Malagua, their Indian guide

and scout, was still absent; but in the course of an hour he made his appearance, and, to the joy of all, he bore upon his shoulder the hind-quarter of a deer, of which he knew the fugitives stood in great need.

Malagua was a tall, powerful Indian of the Ottawa tribe. He was in the very prime of manhood, and in point of physical strength and skill as a scout he had no equal on the peninsula. He had long been known as a friend, to the whites, yet there times when nobody knew upon which side his sympathies hung; and there were times also, when he grew sullen and morose, often refusing to see an intimate friend. But no one could accord these eccentricities to treachery harbored in his mind, for he had long been such a valuable acquisition to the force of scouts employed by the government that all were loth to believe he was otherwise than true.

As before stated, the guide's appearance in camp was hailed with joy by the fugitives. However, without manifesting the least emotion, he advanced slowly toward the women and children and deposited his venison on the floor at his feet with the triumphant air of a king. Then, as if to note the manifestations of joy and thanks, he glanced furtively from one to the other of the party, permitting his gaze to linger a trifle longer upon the pretty, bright face of Helice Arvine.

"Well, Malagua," said Colonel Bliss, "did you make any discoveries in your scouting?"

"See no Injuns," replied the Indian, speaking the English tongue fluently, "but there are many Ojibways in the woods. See their tracks here—there—everywhere—lots of 'em."

"Do you think they were aware of our being in these ruins?"

"Can't tell. Tracks point here—there—everywhere like they hunt for lost trail."

"That may be the case, for we took every precaution to conceal our trail a mile back," replied Bliss, "and if your young friend, Norton, holds out till he reaches Point Michigan, we may expect assistance by to-morrow morning."

"And perhaps Philip will be with the party!" laughed pretty Margery Bliss, glancing at Helice Arvine, who, pursing up her lips at her tormentor, replied, in a playful manner:

"Never mind, Miss Margery. I know a secret about a pair of lovers that you would not like to hear about."

It was Margery's turn now to blush, for there was a secret in her love affairs that was known to no one but her and Helice. In fact no one but Helice knew that Margery loved at all, for she dare not make known her love to her father. Not but what it was a pure love, but because the object of her affections was a young English captain of the royal army, then in America; and she knew her father's hatred of the English would never be conciliated to see his only and motherless child wedded to an enemy."

The venison brought in by the scout was sliced up and broiled for supper, and, after the meager repast was over with, guards were stationed at various points, while Malagua was sent outside to scout in the forest.

Despite the fatigue of their day's journey, Helice and Margery could not sit down and rest easy, so they stole away and began rambling about within the fort, inspecting, with maidenly curiosity, the grim old walls of the fortress, within which the stately soldiery of France had once paraded. They found many things to attract their curiosity, and when they had at length grown tired of rambling about, they ascended a pair of rude stone steps and seated themselves upon the edge of the parapet and conversed in whispers over the vast and future.

The moon soon came up and relieved the surrounding vicinity of much of its gloom and brought out in bold relief all adjacent objects. Around them was the grim, black, interminable forest, in which lurked unknown dangers; and between the woods and the fort was a clearing several rods in width, extending all around the fort, and across which an enemy could not pass unobserved.

"Margery," Helice finally remarked, when their conversation had turned upon the subject, "I don't believe your father places perfect confidence in our Indian guide, Malagua."

"He has said nothing to me on the subject, Helice," replied Margery, "since we escaped from Mackinaw, and he 'most always tells me his thoughts on such things. Yet, he may not have implicit confidence in Malagua, for you know no one has. He acts so curious sometimes that people don't know how to take him. But I think, and don't you, Helice, that he has shown a devotion of friendship to us since our flight began, that certainly can not be construed into a motive of treachery?"

"That's all true, Margery," replied Helice, "but I never liked Malagua. He always looks at me with such a strange light in his little black eyes that has caused me to fear and hate him."

"He has every chance, and has had, to betray us into the power of the bad Indians were he so disposed, for you know he is out alone

most of his time. However, time will tell what Malagua is, and I pray you will not offend him, Helice, by word or act while we are so completely in his power, for you know that trifles often engender a deep, revengeful spirit in the heart of an Indian, and—"

"Oh, Margery! look yonder!" suddenly interrupted Helice, in a loud whisper, grasping her companion by his arm.

Margery looked in the direction indicated and beheld an Indian warrior crawling upon his hands and knees across the surrounding opening toward the fort. He was coming directly toward them, but appeared to be ignorant of their presence upon the parapet. They could see every lineament of his grim, painted face, and the very glow of his snake-like eyes that sent a shudder to their wildly-throbbing hearts.

"Let us run, Helice, and give the alarm," said Margery.

They arose to their feet and were about to descend the stone steps when the report of a rifle suddenly broke the stillness of the night, and was succeeded by a groan of agony from the Indian, who was seen to leap upward and fall back lifeless to the ground.

The person that fired the shot stood at the foot of the wall outside of the fort, and before the maidens could withdraw, Malagua, the friendly Ottawa, sprung over the wall and stood at their side, the smoke curling from his death-dealing rifle.

"Oh, Malagua!" cried Helice, "it was you that shot the bad Indian!"

Before the Ottawa could reply, a savage yell extending in a circle around the fort, thrilled out in horrifying intonations upon the air, and rung in quavering echoes through the aisles of the forest.

CHAPTER XV.

THE GIANT SCOUT'S TEST.

ONE-ARMED ALF and his two companions, old Jack Eller and Captain Philip St. John, pursued their northward course, after leaving the ruins of the cabin, as fast as possible. And they had not journeyed far when Sultan, the scout's hound, began to act in a manner that to his master indicated the presence of danger. This induced greater precaution on the part of the three men, and led to the belief that they were being followed by savages. However, they traveled on till dark, then halted for a few minutes' rest. When they were about to resume their journey the hound betrayed great fears by cowering in front of his master, then bounding away into the woods to return immediately.

"There's somethin' wrong, boys," said One-Armed Alf, "and I dare say that there are Indians about, and so I propose to test the fact."

"How'll ye do it, Alf? how'll ye do it? Don't poke yourself into dangers when there's no need o' it," said old Jack: "by using a little stratagem we may outmaneuver the varlets and escape without givin' battle."

"I will not leave this spot, friend Eller, and yet, if there are any red-skins within an hour's hunt of here, we will know it."

"Humph!" ejaculated the old borderman, "one'd think, from the way you talk, friend Alf, that you were the Spirit of the Woods."

The scout made no reply to Eller, but calling his dog to his side, addressed a few words to him that seemed wholly intelligible to the animal, for he immediately bounded away into the darkness.

"Now, boys," said the scout, "sit down and let us await the return of Sult."

The young officer and Eller complied with the request, but they had scarcely done so when a strange noise was heard off to the south of them, a direction entirely opposite to that taken by the scout's hound. And scarcely a moment had elapsed after the noise had subsided when the patter of feet was heard approaching, and the scout's dog came bounding to his master's side.

The three could just distinguish his outlines, and see that he carried something in his mouth, that proved upon inspection to be the head-dress of an Ojibway chief.

"That's how I ascertain when thar's Indians about," handing the article to St. John for inspection.

"Lordy, who'd a' thought a dog could have so much genuine human gumption?" old Jack exclaimed.

"Well, it proves that we're in danger."

"Yes; but, judging from the direction in which the animal brought the fillet," said the captain, "the enemy are in the rear."

"That's it, exactly, captain. Sultan always comes to me directly from the Indian, so we have got to be moving at once, boys."

So saying, they arose and resumed their journey, moving with extreme caution and silence, with every faculty on the alert.

A low whine from the dog suddenly brought them to a halt.

"Danger!" whispered the scout, keeping his eye upon the movement of his dog.

The sagacious beast had come to a stand, refusing to move a step further. His nose was

elevated in the air, while his tail wagged with slow, panther-like lashes.

"By Jupiter!" exclaimed the Giant Scout in an undertone, "he 'points' a red-skin, boys, and look sharp. If we should meet with dangers that separate us, let it be understood that we meet at the old French fortress, where our friends are besieged."

Before either of his friends could reply there was a fluttering among the undergrowth, a rush of many moccasined feet, and a score of red-skins were upon them.

Fully apprised of the number of the foe, our three friends saw that resistance would be useless, and so they turned and fled. But the trap of the evening had been well set and successfully sprung, and ere they were scarcely aware of it, our three friends were completely surrounded. Captain St. John and old Jack Eller attempted to fight their way out, but their efforts were fruitless; they were overpowered and made prisoners. The old borderman, however, was not conquered without some determined efforts on part of his foes.

One-Armed Alf had been more fortunate than his companions. With a few swift and vigorous sweeps of his huge cane he cleared an opening in that line of living demons; then, with the agility of a deer, he bounded from their midst and escaped into the forest, closely followed by his faithful hound, Sultan.

CHAPTER XVI.

STRANGE PROCEEDINGS.

To Captain St. John and old Jack Eller it soon became evident that they were not to be executed then and there, but conveyed to the Indian stronghold to the northward. This was in a measure accounted for when they heard and recognized among their captors English voices, speaking in tones of authority; all of which convinced them that they had fallen into the hands of a scouting party of British and Indians. They were satisfied now, or at least hoped that English authority would hold them from Indian tortures, notwithstanding the horrors of English prisons. As long, however, as One-Armed Alf, the Giant Scout, was free they could entertain hopes of escape, and at length, when so ordered, they arose and were conducted away through the grim old halls of the woods.

The journey was pursued in silence, and for more than an hour they held on their way with nothing to break the monotony of their travels save an occasional outbreak of anathemas from old Jack, but a blow or kick following each oath, finally proved an incentive to total silence.

They had journeyed three or four miles when a light, reflected among the green foliage of some tree-tops was suddenly discovered a short distance ahead. The party at once came to a halt, and a couple of scouts sent forward to reconnoiter the vicinity of the fire, and ascertain who were encamped there. This, however, required but a few minutes' delay. The scouts came back and gave their report in a tone inaudible to the prisoners. This led old Jack Eller to suspect they were in close proximity to the camp of white friends, who were being threatened with an attack by the Indians, and so he resolved to give notice of their approach, and put the unsuspecting persons on their guard, and at once gave utterance to a shout as vociferous as his iron lungs would admit; and then, in addition to the blow he received for his impertinence, judge of his astonishment when he heard himself thus answered from the camp-fire.

"Dry up thar, ye darned old galoot! Whar's the use of sich bellerin' round the ears of a peaceful soul that's courtin' slumber?"

The tone of the speaker as well as his selection of words, was readily recognized as that of the notorious whisky-trader, Jabez Muggins, by all the party, and as they moved forward, and approached the camp, they saw the burly form of the trader reclining on the ground before the fire, his head resting on his whisky-keg, while his whole face was enveloped in a cloud of obnoxious tobacco smoke, and as the party filed into the light of the fire, the trader coolly turned his eyes and glanced at the band, then resumed his careless, indifferent attitude and air.

"An accursed cool salutation by a professed friend," exclaimed one of our friends' captors, who was a white man, and wore the uniform of an English officer, "a very cool salutation, indeed, Mr. Whisky Mugg."

"That's that infernal whisky-trader, Cap," said old Jack Eller to his fellow captive, "that took sides with the Injuns last night at the scout's cabin. Lordy! if I war loose, I'd spile his physiog in the snap of a finger, the dirty renegadian."

"Indeed, gentlemen," said the whisky-trader, rising to his feet, "I'd have you know that I'm a peaceable citizen of the Russian empire, and am n'utral and goin' to stay so durin' this war, and won't be insulted by my own fireside—no, sir-ee, hoss-fly. I demand a respectful recognishun of myself and property or I'll be smashed to thunder if I don't discombarate somebody's solar system and cause a tilt over

tail in the digestion. Yes, sir; I'm Jabez Muggins, Russian—a royal Russian nabob, gents; and claim protection under that flag, and demand that you show a clean face and the best foot to royalty. Besides, if you want a good hearty spasm out of old life-fountain here, show me your duplicates and I'll gurgle ye out a turn around.

"Thunder!" exclaimed old Jack, indignantly; "you blasted ole skinflint you. I'd hopes you'd burnt up last night, at One-Arm's cabin. But then if you had, the gallows'd been cheated; and now, if you're a half a man, you'll step around here and cut our bonds and help butcher a few of these Ingins and rusties."

"Scat, ole jingle-tongue!" retorted the trader; "It'd be impossible for me to give you aid, insomuch as I'm n'utral—in fact a Russian nabob, travelin' in this heathen kountry for my health and kiverin' my expenses by dispensin' Volga-water 'mong you aborigines."

"You are an infernal sap head and traitor," replied old Jack; "and mind, ole coon, you'll sweat for all this."

"Bah, to such illiterate jargon," replied the trader, in an insolent manner. "I don't want to spend breath with you common herd, for I'm a Russian nabob; so, see here, British sojers, what say you to a smile from the Volga?"

"All right, if you'll trust us till we meet at Mackinaw," said one of the English.

"Trust nothin'!" exclaimed Muggins; "you may all be gone to the devil by that time. I know you've got the spondulies to chalk a dozen knock-em-stiffs, so shell your bark and drink to the health of a Russian nabob."

The officer addressed drew two pieces of silver from his pocket and handed it to the trader, who, glancing at its value, deposited it in his pocket, and then proceeded to draw his liquor. It took some time to "administer" to each of the party, the prisoners excepted; and by the time the last had received his draught, the first was calling for a second.

The prisoners had been securely bound to a tree hard by, so that they could sit down or stand at pleasure; and it was with a feeling of terror that they watched the English officers and soldiers, and their red allies, empty one cup after another of the fiery liquid until the keg was drained. They knew that when their captors were fully under the influence of the whisky they would become objects upon which to vent their drunken, beastly cruelty.

The trader himself had drank as often, if not oftener than any one man in the party, and the effect of these frequent potations could be readily seen in the dull, languid eye, thick speech, and swaggering gait. Further evidence of his debauch were his incoherent muttering and singing, as he lay stretched full length upon the ground.

The Indians appeared to have no control over themselves, but went running and staggering here and there with a drunken leer upon their painted faces, brandishing knives and tomahawks in the faces of the prisoners in a threatening manner. The Englishmen became loud and boisterous, and turned with a string of oaths and epithets upon the luckless "Russian nabob" who had furnished them with liquor, threatening to imprison him unless he would repudiate his claim upon the czar's protection, and swear allegiance to the British crown. But this the "nabob" refused to do.

"Think I'm a cuss'd fool (hic) do you?" he asked—"think I, Jabez Muggins'd go back on ole Russ? No, sir'ree (hic) hoss-fly, Englisher, with a whoop tee doole, whoop tee do."

Then he yawned drowsily, curled himself up in a knot upon the ground, and appeared to sink into a profound sleep.

One of the British officers advanced, and, with a look of contempt upon his face, gave the trader's body a rude push with his foot, rolling him over and over several times, lodging him finally against the same tree to which Captain Philip St. John and Jack Eller were bound. Here the drunken trader was permitted to lay, apparently dead, though a close observer might have seen him open his eyes occasionally, glance quickly around, then close them again, as if in deep slumber.

Then as the minutes wore away, his hand found its way into the bosom of his hunting-shirt, and when it was withdrawn, something bright flashed within it. But there was no other movement of the body, that could have been noticed, for the next ten minutes, nor was the trader once thought of for some length of time by the drunken allies, for their attention was diverted from all else than the harsh, vulgar notes of a bacchanalian song, from the lips of one of the British officers.

Dire confusion reigned, and in the wavering and uncertain gleam of the camp-fire, the dusky figures flitting to and fro made the occasion appear like fiends in a ghostly revel. And in the midst of the confusion and song, two figures in the background were not observed as they arose to their feet and crept stealthily away into the woods. But when the officer had finished his song, and the excited audience turned elsewhere for amusement, they discovered that old Jack Eller and Captain St. John were gone—had escaped! And then a cry arose from

every lip, and the Indians glided away into the woods in search of the missing men.

Two of the English officers, however, remained in camp, and at once proceeded to inquire into the manner of the prisoners' escape. And great was their surprise when they discovered the bonds of the prisoners lying at the foot of the tree, bearing strong evidence of having been cut by a keen-edged knife.

The whisky-trader was still lying apparently asleep, yet from some intuitive motive, the two Englishmen were induced to suspect him of having liberated the prisoners while their attention was diverted from him. At any rate, they conversed awhile in low tones, then they seized the trader and dragged him away into the darkness toward a little waterfall, whose rippling rush they could distinctly hear. And thus was the "Russian nabob" about to undergo some fearful ordeal at the hands of men whose brains had been fired to crime by power of the trader's own whisky; and half an hour later, when they—the Englishmen—returned to the camp-fire alone, it was with a crime-stained conscience—yea, *with blood upon their hands!*

CHAPTER XVII.

"BOAT, AHoy."

"THE Maid of Michigan—the Specter Skiff—is it possible, possible that I am—ay, it is even so, I am aboard that strange, mysterious craft."

Thus Darcy Mayfield mused to himself as he stood erect in the little schooner, mystified and dumbfounded with his two sleeping, silent captors at his feet. He could scarcely believe the evidence of his own senses in the very face of staring facts. He could see that the craft was skimming over the water at a rapid speed, but whether he was being carried to safety or death he knew not. He was not a coward by any means, yet he made no move toward changing the boat's course, nor toward arousing his sleeping captors whose sleep seemed unusually deep and silent.

But, as the moments wore away and the Englishmen stirred not, something like a feeling of terror and desolation crept over him—a feeling of awe which one experiences when he enters alone the death-chamber, or some old ruins of haunted repute. This he tried to shake off as a sudden fear, but he could not. It grew upon him, and at length he approached his captors, bent down and peered into their faces. He started back with a low exclamation of horror. He saw that the eyes of one of the Englishmen were staring wide open with a vacant glassy expression, while upon the forehead of the other one he could just see a small, round hole from which the blood was welling and making a scarlet path across the face. In fact, he saw that both were stone dead, yet reposing in attitudes calculated to mislead one into the belief that they were simply asleep.

A chill of horror now crept over young Mayfield's frame, and conjured up fearful thoughts in his mind. The pistol-shot and groans that he had heard in his dreams, were, after all, realities—stern facts; and he knew not how soon his own fate might be sealed. In fact, the terrible suspense under which he was now placed was agony itself to which the repulsive presence of the dead added additional horrors. From the one he could seek no relief, but the latter he could. This was by consigning the bodies of the dead to the dark waters beneath him, and this he at once proceeded to do, and in a minute's time the bodies were buried beneath the waves of the great lake.

Darcy Mayfield now seated himself, and although but little easier in mind, he could breathe freer.

The boat was skimming along at a rapid speed, the little sail being pressed to its utmost.

The night was still one of gloom and mist—damp, ghostly and dismal. Not a sound could be heard save the dull swash of the water as it closed upon the wake of the craft.

Darcy settled down upon his seat, resolved to consign himself calmly to fate, and lulled by the easy, gliding motion of the craft, he sank into a kind of mental stupor. But from this he was suddenly aroused by a sound resembling the dip and swash of oars, and gazing around him he discovered a long boat, filled with shadowy forms, creeping through the fog toward him, and before he could make out the occupants, clear and distinct on the dismal air, a voice rung out:

"Boat ahoy!"

"Ay, ay," responded our hero, with a promptness that was evidence of his quick perception and decision.

"Halt!" returned the party in the strange boat; "who goes there?"

"A boat of our Royal Majesty of England," replied Darcy Mayfield.

"You lie, curse you," replied the challenger; "you are a loping Yankee—halt, or we'll riddle you with English bullets."

Mayfield heard the demand and threat, and even had he been disposed to obey the order, he could not have done so, for he held no control over the little barque that glided swiftly on.

The next instant a dozen tongues of fire were vomited out from the sides of the English boat,

and the report of musketry stirred the fog around them.

Darcy saw the flash; he heard the report and the whistle of bullets around him: he felt a sharp, stinging sensation about the head, then he sunk down in the boat and all became a blank to his mind.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HANNAH, THE MAID OF MICHIGAN.

WHEN Darcy Mayfield recovered from that state of unconsciousness into which he had been thrown by a musket-ball grazing his head, the first thing of which he became conscious was of a severe pain in the head, and his thoughts were so confused that he could not define his situation nor the cause of his semi-consciousness. Little by little, however, he regained his mind, then one by one he recalled the events of the past down to the time he was hailed and fired upon by the English boatmen.

But where was he now? This is the question that puzzled his feverish brain. He gazed around him. *It was broad daylight.* He could see the clear blue sky overhead, and he could feel a gentle, swaying motion of his couch. Then a sound caught his ear. He lifted his eyes and saw a white sail outspread above him. Then another truth flashed across his mind; he was still aboard the reputed haunted skiff.

With this discovery he attempted to rise to a sitting posture, but found that he was too weak, and as he sunk back into his seat he clasped his aching brow. He started—a bandage was upon his head. Some unknown friend had placed it there—had dressed his wound and cared for him while unconscious. This discovery gave him hope and strength, and by a renewed effort he succeeded in rising once more to a sitting posture. He then gazed around him; a vast, illimitable sheet of water stretched its unbroken length away on every side. Not an object was visible upon it, and he was alone in the craft. Where then was the friend who had dressed and bandaged his wound?

Weak with the loss of blood, and unnerved by the constant excitements of his surroundings, he again sunk down into a state of semi-consciousness. But he was soon aroused again by the electric thrill of a soft, gentle hand passing over his aching, burning brow. He opened his eyes and was startled by sight of a female figure bending over him. But to his surprise her face was covered with a vail, or mask, through which gleamed a pair of bright eyes, now beaming down upon him. She was no spirit, that was evident—but a being in the flesh, with a form beautiful and sylph-like in its proportions. A wealth of blue-black hair streamed in rippling masses down over the rounded shoulders and swelling bosom. Hands with small tapering fingers and of snowy whiteness, were fluttering about his feverish brow, every touch sending a magnetic thrill through his whole frame.

"At last I have obtained a sight of my deliverer's form, at least," Darcy, under the impulse of the moment found strength to remark.

"I am not your deliverer, young stranger, for you are not safe yet," replied the masked maiden, for, from the soft, flute-like notes of her voice, the grace and ease of her movements, and the symmetrical beauty of her form it was evident that she was a young person.

"Not safe yet!" exclaimed Darcy.

"No; your health is in a feeble condition; besides, we are leagues from land, and the lake is swarming with English boats."

As she spoke young Mayfield bent a strong, searching gaze upon her, like one awakening from a sleep filled with haunting dreams. There was something strangely familiar in the woman's tone; it seemed like an echo from the dead past. But his mind was still too unsettled to connect the past with the present, or to fix the identity of his friend and protectress; and seeing that she was desirous of keeping that identity a secret from him, he said:

"I am satisfied then, that you are a friend, good lady; and yet you are a stranger to me, and it is evident from your being masked that you desire to remain unknown."

"That's true, sir," she replied softly; "nevertheless, there is one thing I do not object to your knowing. I suppose you have heard of the Specter Skiff, and the Maid of Michigan?"

"I have."

"You are now aboard of that craft, and I am the Maid of Michigan."

"I suspected as much," replied Darcy; "yet, there are those who believe the Maid of Michigan is but a spirit."

"Indeed?" replied the maiden, and a low, musical laugh rippled in weird-like softness from her lips. "I am glad, very glad that people think so, and it would have been well for some to have kept clear of the Specter Skiff when they found it without occupants."

A faint shudder convulsed Darcy's form at these words, for he knew that she had reference to the death of his two English captors, Krue and Belden, and he could assign their death to no other hands than hers.

"It may be possible," continued the woman, seeing he did not speak, "that we will journey together some length of time, for your health

is in a feeble condition. You bled almost to death last night from the wound you received from the Englishmen and are quite reduced in strength, so I shall not desert you until you are able to take care of yourself. Therefore you can call me Hannah, and rest assured that I am the best friend *living*."

"Best friend *living*?" exclaimed Darcy, with trembling lips, at the same time closing his eyes as if to shut out some painful mental light.

"Yes; your best friend *living*, Walter Garfield."

A low exclamation burst from Darcy's lips as the woman pronounced this name. He struggled to his feet by a desperate effort and bent his gaze upon the maiden—not upon her either, but upon the place where she had stood, for Hannah, the Maid of Michigan, had vanished from the boat as if by magic.

"Oh, Heaven!" groaned Darcy, in agony of spirit; "tell me she is not a spirit come with that voice to haunt my soul!" And then he sunk down, his brain wild with a consuming fire.

CHAPTER XIX.

A RETROSPECT.

We beg the reader will bear with us while we break aside from the main thread of our story and go back three years beyond the date of which we have been writing, to narrate an incident which eventually culminated in many of the scenes and transactions already described.

On a pleasant evening of the summer of 1809 two men were seated in an elegantly furnished room of a residence in Montreal, Canada, engaged in stormy conversation. One of them was an elderly man, the other young, not more than twenty years of age. The former was a person upon whose face was stamped the signet of an evil heart and dissipated habits; while the latter was directly the opposite not only in age but in the expression of features and general character.

"It is no use talking, Sir Joshua Pellington," the young man was saying when we introduce them to the reader, "I have given you my answer, and from it there is no appeal."

"But there is, Master Imbercourt," replied the elderly man addressed as Sir Joshua Pellington; "you should remember, sir, that you are a minor and I am your guardian, as well as Maria Bradbury's, and that the law of England gives me entire control of you and your property."

"That may all be, Mr. Pellington, but the law does not say who you shall select for my wife."

"I know it, Robert, but see here; by wed-
ding your cousin, Maria Bradbury, you will
unite two large English estates and re-establish
the name and power of the Imbercourts."

"I care not a fig for the name. I have sworn allegiance to the American government, and I will never set foot on English shores again. I despise that country. From there was my father banished because he dared express his opinion on the justification of the American Government in seeking redress for the injuries sustained by our commerce from English cruisers on the high seas. Moreover, I would not marry the cousin of which you speak, because I never saw her; besides, I understand she is married already to one Walter Garfield."

"That would make no difference, Robert; Garfield could be—"

"I understand you, Pellington," interrupted the youth, hotly; "you would murder Garfield to accomplish an end that would gratify your unscrupulous cupidity."

"Don't be too rash, Master Robert Imbercourt; I did not say I would murder Garfield, but if you will consent to marry Maria, he shall not stand in your way."

"No; you will murder him."

"Well, let me hear your decision."

"You have it already. I will marry no one, God willing, but Hellice Arvine."

"A poor, plebeian American girl!" sneered Sir Joshua Pellington.

"Be careful, Josh Pellington, how you sneer at Hellice Arvine, or by the heaven above me, I will kill you!" the youth exclaimed, his eyes blazing fire.

"Robert," the villain finally remarked, "you are most too hot-headed to talk to-night. Go back to your hotel, think this matter all over, and to-morrow I will call and see you."

Young Imbercourt sprung to his feet, and snatching his hat from the table, left the room. Scarcely had the door closed upon him when the door of an adjoining apartment opened, and a tall, burly-looking man entered.

"The boy is still stubborn as a mad bull," said the man.

"Yes, major, we are now forced to the last extremity, and *force* must be employed to effect our plans. I am determined that Robert Imbercourt shall marry Maria Bradbury. According to the will of their parents, this unites the two houses, which are worth a quarter of a million pounds each, and at their death I will become heir to all, and I will see that they do,

Major Mackclogan, at your hands!" and the expression of a demon overshadowed the man's face.

"Ha, ha! Sir Josh. You are a tenacious dog, and should win through perseverance. But what course do you think of pursuing now?"

"Capture Rob Imbercourt and Maria Bradbury and carry them in my ship to England, where I will imprison them upon some good pretext until they comply with my wishes."

"Just so; but you may have some trouble in getting Maria Bradbury, or rather Maria Garfield."

"They reside in the settlement not far from old Fort Duquesne, and my plan is for you to take about one hundred Ojibways and sweep across the border in the night, and bring the girl, dead or alive."

"The plan is a perfectly feasible one, Sir Josh; and in consideration of the two thousand pounds promised, all things working out right, I will take the Ojibways, and make the attack whenever desired."

"Give me your hand on that, Mackclogan," said Pellington, rising to his feet and grasping his tool and confederate's hand; "to-morrow night I will have everything ready to leave Montreal and begin the work."

"All right, Sir Josh, all right. I'll be ready too. But, would it not be well to capture Imbercourt while he is in the territory?"

"Yes; we will capture him this very night, and have him confined aboard the Rover."

So saying, Pellington donned his coat and hat, and, accompanied by Major Mackclogan, left the room.

CHAPTER XX.

MALAGUA'S TREACHERY.

THE savage yell that thrilled out upon the night and forest around the old French fortress froze every heart almost with terror that was within the inclosure, and motionless as statues the fugitives stood, expecting every moment to see a horde of savage demons come swarming over the broken, dilapidated walls to strike them down in death. But in this they were thankfully disappointed. For some reason or other the attack was never made. It is probable the foe overestimated the number within the fort and was afraid to attack. They had hoped to frighten the whites into a quiet submission without an appeal to arms.

Closely followed by Malagua, the Indian guide, Hellice Arvine and Margery Bliss ran back and joined their friends at the cabins. They found the women and children huddled in one corner like a flock of frightened deer, while the men, with blanched faces, stood with rifles in hand ready for the threatened ordeal.

"Malagua! Malagua!" exclaimed Colonel Bliss, "what does this mean? Are we to be attacked and butchered alive?"

"No: Injuns no strike now—will by-um-by. Lots of them, here, there, this way and that way," answered Malagua; "Injuns all around."

"Do you think it will be worth our while to attempt to hold out against them?" the colonel questioned.

"There are very many of them—few of us."

"From that I infer we are in great danger."

"The darkness that hides the sun is the only help that is near us. He help us to get away."

"Then you advise a retreat from here under cover of the night, do you?"

"Yes," replied Malagua.

"I am afraid we will never get away from here alive," said one of the women, hopelessly.

"Don't give up, Mrs. Harris," said the colonel; "there's hope as long as there is life."

By this time all had grown quiet without. The Indians had kept their distance, and the silence that now prevailed convinced the fugitives that it was the premonition of a coming storm. So they decided to take Malagua's advice, and make their escape from the fort under cover of the darkness, just as soon as possible.

Dispositions for the hazardous undertaking were at once begun. It was arranged that Malagua should conduct the women and children, one or two at a time, from the fort, out to some point of safety where the men, one by one, were to join them.

Malagua's course was soon decided upon. The spring that welled from the center of the inclosure had worn a deep channel down across the open court, under the edge of the fort, and on down the hill to where it emptied into a nameless creek. The edges of this channel were fringed with weeds and bushes which formed an archway of foliage. Along this the red guide was to conduct the fugitives, trusting to the ripple of the water over the stony bed to drown all sounds that might be made in the transit.

When all was ready for departure, the question arose as to which of the females should go first. This, however, was soon settled by the brave and peerless Hellice Arvine, who expressed her desire and willingness to depart with Malagua to the designated point of meeting outside of the fortress.

In a minute all was ready, and as they turned to leave, Malagua approached Margery Bliss, who stood a little to one side, and said:

"Margery go too, if want to."

There was something in the guide's voice, as well as his looks, that struck Margery as being a little singular; but, unsophisticated as she was in the Indian character, she failed to read the hidden meaning of the scout's permission, and eager to be with Hellice she expressed an earnest desire to accompany her and the Indian. Her father, however, objected to this, but when Malagua expressed himself in favor of her going, for the reason that, by going by twos, the time of getting all from the fort would be shortened one half, the colonel gave way, and his daughter departed with the guide and Hellice.

They entered the channel, before described, a short distance from the spring, and found that they could move along at the edge of the water dry shod. They walked quite rapidly, but in perfect silence, and were soon outside of the fort and within the dense shadows of the woods. Here they advanced with less fear of discovery, and in a few minutes more had reached the creek.

Malagua now conducted them into a dense thicket at the edge of the stream; then, having enjoined the utmost silence and precaution upon them, he took his departure for the fort again.

Hand in hand the maidens stood in the dense dark thicket, a thousand fearful thoughts chasing each other through their excited minds, while the throbbing of their young hearts seemed to still all else around them.

Several minutes had thus passed when the soft tread of moccasined feet caught their ears; then a figure glided into the thicket, and, approaching them, said in a low, startled whisper:

"Bad Injuns on our trail—see us somehow—find us soon—come must hurry away!"

It was the voice of Malagua, and the news he bore almost froze the hearts of the maidens with terror.

"Can we not get back to the fort, Malagua?" Hellice finally asked, in a tremulous whisper.

"No—foller me quick—take you where no danger—go back then and get friends."

He grasped them almost rudely by the arms and hurried them away toward the creek. When he reached the water's brink he paused and drew a canoe from under some drooping willows. Into this craft he hurried the maidens; then entering himself, he took up the paddle, turned the prow of the craft down-stream and sent it flying over the water.

All this change had been made so quickly that the girls had scarcely time for a second thought. But, when Hellice had recovered somewhat from her surprise and fear, she began to grow suspicious of Malagua's sudden and violent actions. He did not act with his usual calm deliberation, but manifested great excitement, and took no pains to avoid making a noise with his paddle.

"Will our enemies not hear the dip of your paddle, Malagua?" she finally asked.

"Not half so quick as they will the young squaw's voice. Let her keep still."

This stern, rude reply went like a dagger to Hellice's heart. Malagua had never spoken to her in such language before, and she saw that all the wickedness of the Indian character was cropping out through the impulse of treacherous designs.

On down the creek in haste they glided, until more than a mile had been traveled, when the Indian turned the canoe abruptly shoreward, where the moonbeams flooded the sandy beach.

Scarcely had the prow touched the bank when the figure of a man, enveloped in a military overcoat and wearing a slouched hat, came from the shadows of the woods and approached them.

The maiden saw that it was a British officer and their hearts sunk within their breasts. They saw, alas! that their suspicions had proven true: Malagua was a traitor! He had decoyed them into the power of the English, and no telling what the consequence would be.

"Well, you have got along at last, have you, Malagua, with your prizes?" asked the British officer, in a low indifferent tone.

A cry arose to Hellice's lips, but Malagua, with all the malignant triumph of a demon depicted upon his face, placed his hand quickly over her mouth, thereby stifling her cries. In the mean time the Englishman sprung into the canoe, and seizing Margery, who was in the act of leaping overboard, drew her down upon the seat at his side.

"Do not be excited, Margery: no harm shall come to you," he said, in a pleasant, assuring tone.

A little cry of surprise burst from the lips of the maidens, for they recognized the voice.

It was that of Captain Paul North, of the English army, whose acquaintance they had made under circumstances of a peculiar nature over three months before. The captain, with a party of cavalry, had been scouting in the vicinity of Mackinaw and met the girls, who had gone out for an evening walk and had got beyond a safe distance from the garrison.

Possessed of all the nobleness and purity of heart of a true and noble man, this young cavalier escorted the maidens to within a short

distance of the fort; and during their journey together an intimacy sprung up between North and Margery of more than friendly relations. Hellice saw this, and although she said nothing about it then, she was satisfied that Margery had been smitten by the young officer. And this proved, in a great measure, true, when on the following day while they were rambling in the woods near the fort, they were met by North again, and a long interview took place between him and Margery. And so these secret meetings occurred almost daily, and before the war had begun he and Margery were plighted lovers, though no one knew it but Hellice.

The circumstances under which they met now would test the sincerity of the young officer's love for Margery. It was evident from the remark with which he greeted Malagua, that he had been sent there to meet the Indian, and yet neither of the captives could believe that one so young and noble in all outward appearances could be guilty of complicity with Malagua in their abduction; but, with an assumed air and tone of doubt, Hellice said:

"Captain North, it is fortunate then that we have met with you, but it is strange why we have been made the victims of treachery and decoyed here where you appear to have met the Indian by appointment."

"I will give you credit, Miss Arvine," the young officer said, smiling, "for more than ordinary keenness of perception. I did come to meet Malagua, but I am acting under orders of General Brock, who sent me here to conduct you to his head-quarters; and I am glad that he did send me."

"Then Malagua is a traitor to the whites?" said Margery.

"To you Americans. He has long been a secret spy of General Brock's army."

"But why are Margery and I victims of this night's treachery?"

"I can not say exactly. There is something wrong somewhere—a deep, villainous motive in your abduction. There is an Englishman in camp who, I am inclined to think, wields great influence over Brock, and whom he has induced to bring about your capture."

"He has succeeded well so far, but you surely will not deliver us into his power, will you, Paul?" asked Margery.

"Do you think that I am the man that would disobey the orders of my superior?" he replied, gazing down with admiration beaming in his eyes upon the pretty pale face of Margery who sat just before and facing him.

"I am deceived in you, Paul, if you would obey such orders."

"God bless you, my sweet Margery, for the compliment; but you can have no idea how little mercy or favoritism there is in military discipline."

"Why does Cap'n North waste time talkin' with silly squaws?" Malagua suddenly put in, a dark malignant frown settling upon his face.

"Malagua, coward and traitor that you are, you should forever hide your evil face and keep silent!" exclaimed Hellice, her eyes flashing with scorn and contempt. "For years have the Americans trusted and treated you as a friend, and now when your assistance is most needed you turn against us. Mind, the Great Spirit will visit judgment upon you!"

A low, indignant "Ugh!" escaped the Indian's lips, and his hand mechanically sought the handle of his tomahawk, but Captain Paul North called his attention to the fact that he had been addressed by a prisoner and a female at that.

"And now, Malagua," he continued, "I will dispense with your further service, and take charge of the captives myself. You can report to General Brock as soon as you desire."

The Indian gave the captain a quick, suspicious glance that implied a volume of meaning; then he quietly arose and stepped ashore, and the next moment disappeared in the dense shadows of the woods.

"The dismissal of that sullen, vindictive traitor may cause me trouble," Captain North said, when the Indian was out of hearing. Then he took up the paddle and sent the canoe out into the middle of the creek, when he ceased paddling and permitted the craft to float at the will of the current.

The young officer was silent several moments, as were the maidens also. At length, however, the captain said:

"Ladies, I have been thinking. There has been a desperate struggle going on in mind and heart between my heart's desires and the right of duty."

"I pray the former will gain the victory," said Margery, her soulful eyes swimming in tears and her lips quivering with a silent appeal that she could not utter; "I say this, because I know, Paul, that the desires of your heart are pure and honest."

"If it does, then I will have violated the laws of people and king."

"Better violate the laws of man than the laws of God, although I speak without knowing to what you refer, as right of duty."

"I refer to your abduction and the part intrusted to me by General Brock."

"Then you think it your duty to deliver us helpless females into the power of our enemies, do you?"

"I do not think it right to do so, but it is my orders, and to violate them would subject me to the stern hand of the law of our military, and no doubt would result in my being shot."

A little cry escaped Margery's lips, and raising her eyes to those of the captain, she said:

"It would hardly be right for us, then, to ask you to violate your obligations to your country, whatever your inclinations might be; and if in your heart you think you are doing right, Paul, conduct us to your commander."

"No, no, dear Margery, this I could never do. Such a creature would not be worthy of any one's love, to say nothing of one so pure and noble as you. I will conduct you forthwith to a point of safety and take the consequences, whatever they may be."

"I would not think it right in us, Captain North," said Hellice, "to ask you to endanger your life, when you were not instrumental in placing us in our present situation."

"I know that, Miss Arvine, and rather than lead you into danger. I would renounce my country and king, even if you should hate me for it. I know that I owe my country no favors, other than the love of family associations that found birth on English soil."

"Then, if you are not an Englishman at heart—have no patriotic love for your king and country, why are you here in arms against the Americans?" asked Margery.

"For the reason that we, common English subjects, have not the liberties of you free-born Americans of a democratic government. Of my own free will I would never have raised arms against America, for the establishment of whose independence my father gave his life-blood at the battle of Brandywine!"

"Then you are an American by birth?"

"No; I was born in England, but when quite young my father emigrated to America, leaving a large fortune in England. After his death, I went to England to procure father's possessions, and was compelled to remain there some time, and when war came I was literally forced into the ranks; and through the influence of relatives who wished to win my affections from America, I was given the commission of a captain of Light Horse. And now that all my future happiness is protected by American arms, I embrace this opportunity of renouncing England and her king."

"I should think you had a right to, captain, for under the circumstances you are an American, and could not be looked upon as a traitor, or deserter to your king and country," said Margery.

"This, then, settles my course, fair Margery," he replied. "I shall proceed with you to whatever point of safety you may designate."

She expressed a desire to return at once to her friends, and he dipped the paddles, turned in to the shore, and assisted them to land. In a few moments more they were under cover of the wood, and on their way toward the old French fortress.

They moved in great silence, Captain North carefully picking an easy route for the maidens, stopping occasionally to give them rest, and speak words of caution and encouragement.

They had traveled nearly or quite a mile, in this manner, when their course led them into a little opening bare of vegetation. In fact, it was nothing more than a bed of white sand glaring ghostly white in the pale starlight; and as they emerged into this opening, they were brought to a sudden halt by sight of the figure of an Indian lying prone upon the sand before them.

It required but a second glance to tell them that it was the form of Malagua, the traitorous guide; and at first they supposed he was asleep, but knowing that such a thing would be greatly at variance with the usual cautious character of the Indian, Captain North mistrusted that all was not right, and leaving the maidens he advanced toward the prostrate form.

To his surprise and horror he found Malagua was stone dead. He saw that he had been quite recently slain, too, for the warm blood was still welling from a bullet-hole in the breast.

The Spirit of the Woods had been there!

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MYSTERIOUS FIREFACES.

For hours, long and weary, those of our friends whom we left in the old French fort, awaited the return of Malagua, after his departure with Margery and Hellice, unable to account for his protracted absence. In the mean time nothing had been seen of the Indians around the fort in the woods, and the very facts of their having made no further demonstrations upon the place, and the non-appearance of Malagua, led them to suspect something of the truth. Malagua was a traitor, and had decoyed Hellice and Margery away from the fort into the hands of enemies. This view was strengthened by the fact of Malagua's anxiety for Margery to accompany him and Hellice when about to leave.

However, they had heard no sound that indicated trouble outside of the fort, more than

the faint report of a rifle, but this emanated from far down the creek, a direction almost opposite to that taken by the maidens and their red guide.

Colonel Bliss became almost frantic over the unknown fate of his idolized daughter, and his friends could hardly restrain him from rushing out in search of her, a step that would have endangered the lives of all.

When silence and calmness had been restored, new measures of defense were at once suggested and adopted.

Tom Koder, an experienced scout and Indian-fighter, was at once sent out to reconnoiter. When he returned he reported the woods alive with Indians; but, as Tom was given to exaggeration when excited, a due allowance was made upon his story; yet, the presence of Indians about at all, was evidence of their danger, and the difficulty that would attend any effort to escape from the fort during the night.

Under the circumstances what were they to do? If Malagua had turned traitor, the chances were that he would give the Indians such information as would enable them to carry the fort.

As the minutes wore away, one of the party suddenly came running into the cabin, where several of the men were assembled, greatly excited. He reported that he had seen the figure of a man skulking among the weeds on the inside of the fort north of the cabins.

A close search was at once instituted, but nothing was found or seen of the skulker. They did, however, find a beaten path leading along the base of the eastern wall from the little channel worn by the water from the spring, as hitherto mentioned. The path followed along the works several rods, being screened by weeds and vines.

Tom Koder inspected the trail and pronounced it that of some kind of animal whose home was in the earth.

The presence of several large holes in the ground within the inclosure, made his guess probable. But for all this, Colonel Bliss was not willing to accept this as conclusive, and proposed to make some further investigations; but the fearful cry of "Indians! Indians!" rung from the lips of one of the sentinels posted near the gate. The sound was taken up and repeated by his companions, until finally hushed in the wild, demoniac yells of the horde of red demons without.

Then arose a scene of confusion and terror that beggars description, in and out of the fort. The yells of the savages, as they hurled themselves with terrific violence against the feeble gate, made the night hideous; and to these sounds were soon added the crash of fire-arms, shouts of the men and screams of the women and children.

For awhile it seemed that the savages could never withstand the galling fire poured upon them by the little band of defenders, for they were constantly exposed, while the whites were well defended from bullets by the grim old walls of the fort. But there were voices—the voices of English leaders—cheering them on. They reached the walls of the fort; then quick and heavy fell the blows of tomahawks upon the crumbly old gate, until at length it yielded.

Then, by the dozens, the yelling, screeching horde of savage demons poured into the fort.

The gallant little band of defenders retreated into an angle of the inclosure, where, partially covered by the cabin in which the females were sheltered, they continued to pour their deadly fire into the ranks of the foe.

But, even there they cannot hold the two-score of infuriated fiends at bay; but they can die fighting, and it is to the death they have resolved to fight, rather than be taken alive.

Encouraged by their success in gaining the interior of the fort, the savages press on.

The lion voice of old Colonel Bliss can be heard, high above the din of battle, shouting words of encouragement to his men and derision to the foe. The latter, however, are fast gaining upon the little band of whites. They are flanking them on the right. Some have climbed over the parapet in the rear. Others have crept around behind the buildings, while others are pressing hard in front.

A minute more will decide the fate of our friends.

But hark! The sharp, shrill twang of a horn suddenly breaks out above the din of battle. It is answered by a yell that seems to issue in chorus from a hundred throats.

There is a lull in the conflict; the combatants appear paralyzed with sudden terror.

Then out from the walls of the opposite side of the fortress floats a score of human forms concealed behind masks of dull, glowing fire. They are almost nude, wearing nothing but loin-cloths made of skins. Their skin is white yet they appear like spirits from demon-land with faces of burning flame.

They are armed with rifles and pistols, and as they advance, they pour a deadly fire into the ranks of the red-skins. A short, decisive conflict ensues; the strange and terrible Firefaces close in upon the savages, with unearthly yells. The red-skins become filled with terror and fear;

they fall back—they break and run like frightened sheep. The Firefaces follow and shoot them down wherever overtaken.

In ten minutes more not a living savage is within the fort. But the ground is strewn with lifeless bodies, and fearful sounds are heard echoing through the woods.

Our friends stand amazed. They are saved, but they know not from whence this unexpected assistance came. They know, of course, that it was from friends; but why were they in masks? and such masks, too—masks of glowing flame!

But, the battle is over. The savages have fled in terror and affright, and now one of the mysterious Firefaces approaches our friends. Colonel Bliss advances to meet him, and when near can see that his mask was covered with phosphorus, which gave it the fire-like appearance.

"Ho, stranger-friend!" exclaimed the colonel, in a tone that was intended to be fearless and frank, but he could not conceal the tremor of doubt and uncertainty which he felt; "your coming was opportune. A minute later and we were lost."

"I dare say," replied the Fireface, in a strange, muffled tone; "but you and your friends are still in danger, and my advice to you is to leave here at once, if you would avert trouble."

"We'll endeavor to profit by your advice, Sir Stranger," replied the colonel, "but I'd like well to know who you are."

"I presume so, sir; but that information I decline to give. Suffice it to say you have been saved from an Indian massacre by a band of disguised men, who, to tell the truth, are not really your friends."

"Whew!" ejaculated Bliss, in astonishment; "that's singular information; but if it's your wish I'll add no further questions. In behalf of myself and friends, let me say that to you unknown strangers we extend our best wishes and heartfelt thanks."

"In reply, let me say that we have a request to make of you."

"Name it, 'squire, name it."

"That each and all of you take an oath that you will never reveal the fact of your being saved from death by a band of masked men."

"Well, really, captain, that is a hard request to comply with."

The masked stranger moved uneasily when Bliss addressed him as "captain," but without adding a word he turned and motioned to his companions to come up.

The colonel made known the desire of the Fireface to his companions and friends, who, with one accord, consented.

"All right, captain," shouted Bliss, "we'll swear eternal secrecy in this matter of yours."

The Firefaces approached and formed themselves in a line before our friends, who were also drawn up in line. Then the leader of the band stepped forward and requested them to raise their right hand; then in a clear, distinct voice, he said:

"You and each of you do solemnly swear that you will never reveal the fact of your having been rescued from death by a band of masked men in this fort on the night of the — of July, 1812; so help you God."

Our friends all bowed silent affirmation, when the masked strangers repeated in chorus:

"We are living witnesses to your solemn oath."

"And now, friends," said the leader of the unknown men, "take my advice and leave here at once, or you may have other than Indian dangers upon you; so farewell, forever."

"Farewell, forever," repeated his comrades; then they all turned and moved away toward the north side of the fort, leaving our friends in almost speechless wonderment.

The strangers soon disappeared behind the row of wooden buildings, and when Tom Koder looked after them a moment later, they were nowhere to be seen.

Preparations were at once begun for departure from the fort. This occupied but a short time, and in a few minutes more they were out in the forest, journeying toward Detroit.

They traveled on until nearly morning, when they stopped to rest in a little woodland glade, where they remained until after daylight. Tom Koder procured some wild game, which was cooked and served up for breakfast, after which dispositions were made for immediate departure. But, judge of their heartrending surprise and horror to see, when about ready to resume their journey, an officer of the English army enter the opening with a flag of truce, and followed by two score of soldiers and Indians. And like a death-knell sounded the officer's voice when, in stern tones, he demanded the immediate and unconditional surrender of the little band of persecuted fugitives.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN INTRUDER.

FOR full a minute the fugitives under Colonel Bliss stood as if rooted to the spot with terror when the demand for their surrender was made. The old colonel scratched his head in

dire perplexity, and it was not until the demand of the officer was repeated that he gained composure to reply.

"I do not recognize your authority to demand the surrender of a party of peaceable people—women and children and non-combatants," he said.

The officer, as if in reply to the colonel, advanced slowly toward our friends, waving his flag above his head, while a living line of Indians and British soldiers poured into the glade from all points.

The enemy were a detachment of Brock's advancing army, numbering about one hundred and fifty soldiers and Indians, all of whom made their appearance as if to destroy all hopes of escape in the hearts of the fugitives.

"I demand your surrender," the English officer finally said, "in the name of the king of England, and guarantee you a safe conduct to the nearest post held by our forces."

"To Halifax with you," roared the old colonel, "who ever heard of a peaceful party of old men and women surrendering? If you can't capture us, you'd better retreat, cowardly knaves that you are."

"I have no time nor desire for trifling with you, old Yankee," replied the officer; "but, if you will pass over your weapons in a quiet way, no harm shall come to you."

"We would be a very foolish set of old folks to undertake to contend with the whole British army," replied the colonel; "therefore, I suppose we will have to submit. But it is with but little hopes of you fulfilling your promise. The presence of those bloodthirsty savages recalls the horrors of Wyoming and Fort William Henry."

"You need have no fears of treachery, sir," said the officer, advancing and taking the colonel's gun.

The rest of the armed fugitives followed the colonel's example by giving up their arms, which were carried away by three of the soldiers.

The prisoners remained in the glade, a detail of about thirty Indians being placed over them. Bliss objected to the savages as guards on the ground of their characteristic treachery; but now, that they were at their mercy, the officer paid no attention to him, and in a few minutes departed with his soldiers, leaving the captives solely in charge of the savages.

This left the fugitives in a constant state of fear, for they knew not what moment they would be set upon and slain.

Shortly after the departure of the soldiers, two men on horseback rode into the opening. One was a civilian, the other an officer; both were Englishmen. Riding up to the captives, they glanced from one to the other with the cool, speculative manner of cattle buyers; then they spoke a few words in an undertone and rode away, apparently disappointed.

The savages kept the prisoners in the glade until about noon, when they set off upon the trail of the soldiers. The captives were not hurried, though a constant and close watch was kept upon them.

An hour before night they went into camp; and now Tom Koder and old Colonel Bliss noticed movements among the savages that boded no good. In fact, the terrible suspicion arose in their minds that plans had been laid for the massacre of the whole party, and that their movements were only being made to divert attention from the truth.

Our two friends were somewhat surprised, however, when they saw the savages building a double row of camp-fires down a wide avenue beneath the great forest trees; and were induced thereby to change their minds as to the intentions of their captors; though they were at a loss to know what was to be done. They were, however, not permitted to remain in doubt long, for a savage approached Tom Koder and informed him that he was to furnish amusement for the evening by running a gantlet of fire-brands and switches.

Tom received the news with a cool indifference that was provoking to his captors. He at once nerved himself for the ordeal, and at the same time revolved in his mind the chances that the punishment would afford him for escape.

The women and children had all been placed in a tent or bower made of bushes and poles, and a guard placed over them, while the men had all been securely bound to trees and saplings hard by.

The preparations for Tom Koder's torture went on, and in the course of half an hour all the arrangements were concluded. Then Tom was led out and stripped to the waist, for his naked back was to be the mark of the burning brands and toughened switches as he passed down the double line of foes.

As yet Tom had not manifested the least fear regarding his proposed torture, and stood, immovable as a statue of stone, waiting for the signal to start down between the two lines of upraised switches and flaming, sputtering torches.

At length the signal is given, but, before Tom could start, the attention of the whole party was drawn to a pair of new-comers,

whose presence detained the opening of the torture for the time being.

The intruders were One-Armed Alf and his dog, Sultan.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DARCY'S STORY TOLD TO HANNAH.

WHEN Darcy Mayfield regained his composure, he arose to his feet, and supporting himself by the mast, gazed around in hopes of obtaining some clew to the sudden disappearance of that strange girl, Hannah, the Maid of Michigan. But, all the watery waste around him, broken by no living creature or inanimate object upon its pulseless bosom. Advancing to the fore part of the craft, he gazed down into the deep blue waters that were parting before the sharp prow of the little schooner.

"How do you like the Specter Skiff, Mr. Mayfield?"

It was Hannah's voice that asked the question. Darcy whirled around, and found himself face to face with the Maid of Michigan.

"In Heaven's name, woman—Hannah! where have you been?—where did you come from?"

A clear, musical laugh was the only response.

"I am certain, Hannah," Darcy continued, "that it is a serious matter to me; this excitement is too much for my poor brain."

His physical strength seemed to give way, and he slid down upon the bottom of the skiff, his brain confused and throbbing with pain.

Here for hours he lay tossing and raving in a delirious fever of the brain, totally unconscious of the sweet, fair face and tearful eyes bending over him, and of the smooth little hand that chafed his throbbing temples and laved his burning brow.

It was a long time before he grew easier, and even then it was hours ere he regained consciousness—far in the silent depths of the night. When he had recalled his situation and condition, he found that darkness was around him, that he was still upon the lake, and that the Maid of Michigan was seated at his side, applying cold cloths, dipped in the water, to his brow.

"Oh, Hannah!" he exclaimed, when taking in his situation, "I have passed through a fearful ordeal since I went to sleep; but I will never survive another."

"You are only weak and discouraged, Mr. Garfield. You must remain quiet, and not let your situation trouble you," Hannah replied.

"I cannot remain quiet now; I must talk, Hannah. I am going to die; I will never see to-morrow's sun."

"Oh, sir, do not talk so!" she remonstrated, half-choking in utterance. "You are not going to die."

"I tell you I am, Hannah. It is no use struggling against fate, however reluctant we may be to accept the truth. But if I do die before we reach land, perhaps you can manage to consign my body to the lake, for I would not have you incumbered with my corpse. I would, however, like to tell you a little secret before death silences my voice forever, and exact a promise of you to repeat the same story to one person in the world, should you ever meet her, that she may know how I have suffered and died."

"I will be pleased to serve you," she said, seating herself by his side, "by listening to your story, although I am satisfied you will survive this attack."

Darcy raised himself upon his elbow, then in a feeble tone, that told of his weakness, he began:

"Scarcely three years ago, Hannah, I was the happiest man on earth—the husband of one of the fairest and dearest women on earth, at least she was so to me. We dwelt in a pleasant little home in Pennsylvania, and although we were far from rich, we were comfortable and happy. Maria, my little wife, was of English parents, in whose veins ran the noblest blood of England. Her father had, for some political offense, been banished from his native land. He came over and settled in America when Maria was a little child, and before she had grown to womanhood she was left an orphan. But she was not alone and friendless; she had two half-brothers—children of her father's first wife—who loved the petted Maria with all the fondness of the human heart. And noble fellows they were, too, the eldest standing in the place of a father to Maria until I married her."

"As time ran on, Maria's mother succeeded, by lineal descent, to a large property in England, but, as she was dead at the time, Maria became the next heir. It seems as though there had been some curious wills made in connection with the property, with still more curious provisos.

"One day a letter came to Maria from a cousin of hers that surprised her very much. Her cousin, Robert Imbercourt, wrote that his and Maria's uncle, Sir Joshua Pellington, then residing in Montreal, had been appointed administrator of the English estate, as well as that of a large fortune to which Robert was heir. He was also the guardian of young Im-

bercourt, and undertook to dictate to him who he should marry. He selected Maria, my wife, and his cousin, for by such a union, he urged that two large and noble English houses would be united. He must surely not have known, at the time, that Maria was already married, else he would not have urged such measures.

"But Imbercourt wrote that Pellington was a bad, unprincipled man, who in case of his, Robert's, death, would succeed to his property, and he believed that his great interest in the matter was from motives of selfishness and cupidity. That is, he wanted Imbercourt to wed Maria and unite the two estates, then, by a single blow, of the assassin's hand, make himself heir to all.

"When the villain found out, however, that Maria was married, and there was no possible chance of uniting the two estates by marrying the cousins, he resolved upon a bolder stroke. He resolved to put Maria out of the way, then no obstacle would stand between him and her estates, to which he would also succeed in case of her death.

"With a party of English soldiers and renegades, under one Major Mackclogan, and a number of Ojibway Indians, Pellington crossed the line; and swept down upon our home like a vulture, and from that night until this I have never seen my darling Maria, nor her youngest brother. They were either killed or carried away into captivity, and I have been a lonely wanderer ever since, living daily in hopes that I will gain some clew to my missing Maria."

"Yours is a sad story," replied Hannah, who appeared to have been greatly interested in the story, "but you did not say what became of your wife's eldest brother."

"He is still living, poor fellow, a terror to the demons that destroyed our homes and happiness. The spirit of vengeance painted the features of every renegade Briton and savage upon his memory, never to be erased while his life lasted. Yes, yes, the war of vengeance, that noble and brave Charles Bradbury is waging against the demons is terrible, terrible, Hannah!"

"Charles Bradbury, Bradbury," repeated Hannah; "I have heard that name before. But, how came you here, a captive in the power of those two English soldiers, Kruler and Belden?"

"For two years have I been searching the peninsula of Michigan for my lost Maria, for I knew not but that she might be a captive among some of the Indian tribes. Somehow or other that inhuman wretch, Sir Joshua Pellington, got wind of my movements, and for fear I would find Maria, sent men out to capture me. This much I learned from a conversation which I overheard between Kruler and Belden."

"Very likely," mused Hannah; "but I thank God the villain has been defeated; and now, when you are able to listen to a long story from me, I will reveal to you a secret, Walter Garfield, that will forever lift that burden from your poor, bleeding heart."

Darcy Mayfield started as though suddenly aroused from a deep slumber, as these words fell from Hannah's lips. He rose partially up on his elbow, turned and was about to speak, but did not, for Hannah, the mysterious maid, was gone—had vanished the second time, as if she had been a spirit whose home was beneath the blue waves of Michigan.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A WAIL AS IF OF AGONY.

FOR a moment Captain Paul North stood and regarded the lifeless form of Malagua with strange thoughts revolving in his mind. It was true the Indian had been slain by that mysterious Spirit of the Woods; but after all, he had been the ignominious death of a traitor. Thus reflecting, his own case came up before him. Would he not be looked upon by his comrades in arms as a traitor, and by those to whom he had fled as a coward and deserter? Surely not. He had not entered the service of the king willingly. His father had fought for American independence; and, after all, he was, by legal virtue, an American subject, having been forced into the service of the king while sojourning in England on business connected with his father's estate. In fact his case was one of the many out of which arose the trouble between England and America which finally resulted in the war of '12.

Captain North was suddenly reminded in his cogitations, however, that Margery Bliss and Hellice Arvine were awaiting his return and protection, and so he left the body of the treacherous Malagua, and rejoined the maidens, to whom he made known the startling discovery.

"And now," he continued, "the nearest point of safety that we can reach will be the most desirable. I am satisfied that if we should ever get inside of the old French fortress, we would never get out alive and free. While we are safe we had better keep clear of danger and shape our journey toward Point Michigan. There I will be enabled to change my uniform of a British soldier for that of an American; and will then endeavor to obtain a party of

men and return to the assistance of those in the old fort, if they are not captured or released before."

"To you we intrust our lives, Paul," said Margery, "and will go wherever you think is best. But oh! it is agony to have to leave my poor old father behind, at the mercy of the savages!"

"I know it, Margery; but we can do nothing but hope and pray for their deliverance," replied the noble Hellice.

"God bless you, dear Hellice," Margery cried, in raptures of hope and joy; "you are a good girl, trusting to Heaven for all your happiness and future hopes. But let us not tarry here longer, for a minute lost may prove fatal. A long, long journey is before us, and to you, Paul, we intrust every thing."

The young soldier pressed his little love to his breast, and planted a silent kiss upon her fair brow; then he started forward, closely followed by his fair charges.

They soon came to the creek where they had left the canoe, and entering this, crossed to the opposite bank. Captain North sent the canoe adrift to conceal the point where they had landed, and pushed on into the tangled thickets and intricate mazes of the wilderness.

They journeyed on three or four miles with not a complaint or murmur from the maidens' lips. Nor did their footsteps grow weary, but with a nerve and perseverance worthy of strong, brave men, they pressed their way, filled with bright hopes and promises of soon reaching a haven of rest and safety.

At length, however, Captain North prevailed on them to stop and rest, for they had already displayed a power of endurance and strength that was bound, ere long, to exhaust their physical powers unless recuperated with food and rest.

The trio stopped on a little eminence, and were seated on a fallen log, conversing in a low tone, when sudden silence was enjoined upon them by a strange sound echoing through the still night woods.

All listened for a repetition of the sound, but they heard nothing save the soft murmur of a little watercourse that danced along through the woods not far away, mingled with the faint, sullen roar of a little cataract far down the creek. Not another sound could be heard but these two, and they, breaking forth upon the silence of the midnight air, seemed ghostly and unreal, and started in the fugitives' minds strange, weird visions.

"It is strange what that noise was," Captain North finally remarked, his tone betraying some uncertainty and uneasiness.

"To me it appeared like the doleful cry of a wolf," said Margery, in a subdued tone.

"It is strange we did not all hear alike," said the fearless Hellice, "for to me it sounded like a human cry—ah! there it is again!"

True enough the sound was again repeated, wailing through the woods like a prolonged wail of human agony.

"I tell you it is a human cry," persisted Hellice; "some one is in distress! Oh, let us hurry, Captain North, and save him."

"It is human, I admit, Miss Arvine," replied the captain, "but it may be a decoy to lead us into trouble. Some wretches may be taking advantage of your kindness of heart to lead you into a snare."

"True, Captain North," replied Hellice, "women are more apt to listen to the cries of the suffering than men. They are more sensitive and sympathetic; and although that cry may be a decoy, I am sure we will not leave without investigating the matter."

"Certainly not, Miss Arvine. My ears have never been deaf to the cry of suffering humanity, but under the circumstances your safety should be my first consideration."

"Oh, dear! dear!" suddenly cried Margery, with a shudder, "there is that awful cry again! Oh, Paul, I know no enemy could imitate the moans of one in dying agony like that. Oh, haste, Paul! haste!"

Captain North could not stand indifferent to the appeals of the soft, sweet-voiced Margery, so rising to his feet he drew his saber; then, followed by the brave, peerless maidens, he crept down the little creek in the direction from whence the cries emanated.

The roar of the little cascade hitherto mentioned, grew plainer and plainer as they advanced, and from near this those wails of distress appeared to rise. Stealing silently on, they suddenly found themselves upon the verge of a stony cliff, over which the little creek poured down in a hundred threads of foam.

Here they paused and listened, and from the foot of the rock below, mingled with the continuous song of the cascade, arose that awful wail of agony again and again.

The maidens shuddered, and pressed their hands over their ears to shut out the dreadful sound.

"At the foot of this cliff, girls," said Captain North, "is the being whose cries we hear, and were I not afraid it is a decoy, I would leave you here till I went below to investigate the matter. But to do so, might be to leave you completely at the mercy of hidden enemies."

"Then we will go with you, captain," replied Hellice.

"This settles the question, then," returned North, and with drawn saber he began picking his way down a narrow defile in the cliff, followed by the maidens, who seemed to float from point to point with the sure, airy footsteps of gazelles.

At length the plain below was reached, then the trio paused again and listened. Low and feeble rose that wail again from the foot of the cascade.

Cautiously and silently the three stole along the base of the cliff. They had gone but a few rods when the little waterfall and the source of the stream for some distance below burst suddenly upon their view, as they lay revealed by the broad, bright glare of the moon.

Then another of those cries of agony wailing out upon the still night, directed their attention to the foot of the falls, where, in among the mist and spray, they beheld a sight that chilled their blood, and caused Hellice and Margery to recoil with a cry of horror.

CHAPTER XXV.

A STORMY INTERVIEW.

THE fall of Mackinaw and the occupation of northern Michigan by the English forces was followed by the advance of the British army under General Brock upon Detroit, where Hull, with the American forces, was posted. With the English army proper, however, our story has nothing in particular to do; but one incident connected with our romance compels us to call the attention of the reader to the headquarters of General Brock while he was encamped with his army on the peninsula near the old French fort, hitherto mentioned.

In the tent of the British commander, on the morning of the escape of Captain Philip St. John and old Jack Eller from the power of the Indians, two persons were seated engaged in conversation. One of these persons was an Englishman wearing the clothes of a civilian, the other was an American dressed in the uniform of a captain of the American army.

The latter, it was easy to be seen, was a prisoner, although he was not bound, but two soldiers kept guard outside of the tent.

The Englishman was a man of about forty years, and possessed features that were hard and cruel, and even repulsive in those outward signs that told of a life of wickedness and dissipation.

With this man we have met before. It was Sir Joshua Pellington, and the young prisoner before him was none other than our young friend, Captain Philip St. John, who had unfortunately fallen into the power of the advance guard of the English army soon after his escape from the Indians.

Why these two were closeted in Brock's tent alone, we will let the run of their conversation tell, omitting the preliminaries and question which led to this reply from young St. John:

"It is no use talking, Pellington; you cannot force me to submit to your desires in this matter. I prefer death to such a villainous deed. Three years ago at Montreal you harassed my life almost out of me to marry my cousin, Maria Bradbury, in order to unite the estates of the Imbercourts and Lessingfords, which I solemnly believe you intended to make yourself owner of at once. But I objected to such a course then, for two reasons: one was, Maria was married to a man she loved, Walter Garfield, and the other because I loved another."

"Yes," sneered the haughty, relentless villain, Sir Joshua, "you loved and were engaged to a low-born, plebeian American girl—one Hellice Arvine, whom I have taken the precaution to put out of your way."

The young captain sprung to his feet as the villain spoke, and the fire that gleamed in his eyes completely cowered the English bully, who, endeavoring to affect a cool indifference with poor success, replied:

"Sit down, Robert Imbercourt, and let us have one talk without quarreling. You should remember that I am your mother's brother, and by virtue of her will and the laws of England, your guardian."

"I care not for our relationship, sir," retorted St. John; "it will be no barrier between my fist and your crime-marked face if you speak disrespectful of Hellice Arvine again, now mind."

"We will have no further words on that score, Robert," said Pellington, "but let me inform you that the influence I have with General Brock is all that will save your life as a deserter."

"I am not a deserter, sir, and I scorn your influence. I am no longer the subject of the British crown, but an American. I have discarded the name of Imbercourt because the blood of the Pellingtons is in the family; and as to my English fortune, I shall have nothing to do with it, for it has already entailed a curse upon many. And as my guardian you may consider yourself discharged. I am able to look after my own welfare; it is your own vile, wicked and selfish interests you have been working after, not mine, nor the Bradburys."

"I am not speaking of the Bradburys at all,

Robert, for as I said before, they were all murdered—Maria and her husband, and her two brothers, Charles and Amos."

"Yes, and who murdered them?" St. John asked fixing a stern, desperate look upon the villain.

"Why, as I told you, a band of Indians and English renegades."

"And by your instigation, too, was the murder committed! *I heard your arrangements for the deed with one Major Mackclogan, that same night that we met in Montreal!*"

Sir Joshua turned ghastly pale, and for a moment it seemed as though he would be unable to maintain his seat.

"Robert," he finally gasped, "you are fast growing into a hot-headed, impulsive Yankee."

"Better that than an English assassin."

Again Sir Joshua winced under the youth's cutting retort.

"It's no use talking to you, Robert Imbercourt," he said, evasively.

"I am not Robert Imbercourt, but Philip St. John," interrupted the young man, "and I glory in the commission of a captain of the American army, given me by President Madison."

"That commission may prove your death-warrant, too, impulsive boy. Had you married your cousin three years ago, as I wanted you to—"

"Yes," again interrupted the captain, "then our inheritance would have been as one, and by one sweep of your murderous knife, you would have been immensely rich."

Sir Joshua ground his teeth with a rage he dare not express openly, for at heart he was a base coward.

"Laying aside all war of words and taunts, Robert," he finally said, "let me inquire how you knew Maria was married at the time I saw you in Montreal three years ago? You told me then that you had never seen her nor either of her brothers."

"I say so yet. I never saw the Bradburys in my life, but I learned through a friend that Maria was married to one Walter Garfield, and so I wrote forthwith to her of your proposition to me and warned her of the damnable plot you and Mackclogan had concocted for her murder, which you finally carried out by killing the whole family."

"Do you know Darcy Mayfield of Point Michigan?" the villain coolly asked.

"I have seen him; but what designs can you have against his life?" was the cutting response.

"None at all, my dear nephew; I have heard that he is Maria's husband, Walter Garfield."

This was really news to the captain, but it let in a ray of light upon a matter over which he had pondered a great deal. His thoughts went back to the cabin of One-Armed Alf. He recalled the demand of Long Run for Darcy Mayfield's surrender, and the conviction was at once forced upon him that Long Run was acting in accordance with the wish of Sir Joshua himself. He recalled the fact of Darcy's silent demeanor, and the deep troubled look that his face wore, which led to the belief that he was the terrible avenger, the Spirit of the Woods. His deadly hatred of the red-skins tended to confirm this fact; and from what he had already gleaned from Pellington, taken in connection with what he had seen himself of Darcy, he was satisfied that Mayfield was Maria's husband also.

Before either Sir Joshua or Captain Philip could again speak, the tramp of hoofs, and the jingle of sabers broke upon their ears, and the next moment a number of horsemen drew rein in front of the tent.

"Ah," exclaimed Sir Joshua, "it is General Brock and his staff; and now, Robert, the army will soon be on the march toward Detroit, and it will not be incumbered with prisoners. So you must make up your mind—decide yes or no—remembering that the latter will be *death*."

"You have my answer already," replied the indomitable youth; "it is *no!*"

"Then your blood be upon your own head: and now I shall see the general and report to him."

So saying, Sir Joshua went out of the tent, leaving Philip to ponder over his fate. The Englishman spoke to the general, who, leaving his well-trained steed standing unhitched in front of the tent, stepped aside, and entered into a low conversation with Pellington.

The flap of the tent was left open, and Philip could see all that was passing in front. He saw Brock leave his steed standing unhitched, and saw that the attention of his two guards and the general's staff was drawn away to the gymnastic performance of some young Indian warriors at the further side of the camp. All this filled his mind with a desperate resolve—a resolve to attempt to escape. It was an undertaking that would result either in freedom or death—one that none but a man of exceptional bravery and daring would attempt.

Philip, however, did not wait to calculate his chances, for fear discretion might get the better part of his valor, but with a single bound, like that of a panther, he reached the side of the general's horse. Another leap, and he was

upon the animal's back, flying through the camp with the speed of the wind.

His daring adventure was discovered almost instantly, and shouts and yells arose upon every side. But this thunderous noise only served to increase the speed of the fugitive's frightened steed.

The whole army was instantly astir, and a stream of leaden hail sent after the fearless young captain. Brock's staff and body-guard instantly leaped into their saddles and gave chase, but well they knew that the general's horse had no match for speed in all the army.

The fugitive cleared the encampment unharmed, and away into the woods he fled, pursued by a hundred horsemen. But he was soon out of harm's way, and as his fears began to subside, those terrible words of Sir Joshua Pellington began to ring in his ears:

"You were engaged to one Hellice Arvine, a low-born, plebeian American girl, whom I have taken the precaution to put out of the way."

CHAPTER XXVI.

TROUBLE IN CAMP.

THE unceremonious intrusion of One-Armed Alf, the Giant Scout, in the Indian camp, at the very moment that Tom Koder was to become the victim of the savages' barbarous entertainment, was met by a general murmur of indignation.

At first the red-skins did not recognize the scout; but when the light of the camp-fires revealed his face, they appeared completely nonplussed by the cool indifference with which he came among them, carrying no weapons of any sort. This, in fact, disarmed them of hostile feelings against him, for his calm, matter-of-fact intrusion appeared to be made with impunity, arising from ignorance of the existing of hostilities between the whites and Indians.

Pausing in the center of the camp the scout leaned upon his long cane, and ran his keen eyes over the assemblage without appearing to notice what was about to be enacted there.

"Good-evening, red-skins," he said in a tone devoid of apprehension or dramatic effect.

"Howdo?" responded the leader of the savage band, known as Wild Cat; "why One Arm come here?"

"I was journeying in these parts, when, espying your camp-fire, concluded to call and spend the night with you," replied the scout.

"Scout for Yankee Fadder, eh?"

"They tell me there is war between my people and the English; is it so?" he replied evasively.

"He much so."

"Then you, being my friends, can have no objections to me scouting for my people can you?"

"One Arm don't know all. Ojibways fight for Canada Fadder."

"Is that so, Indian?" replied the scout, apparently surprised at the news.

"Wild Cat say he so—that make him so."

"But I see one of my people among you," said the scout, referring to Koder, who stood silently listening to the interview, with his arms folded across his breast; "and I see he is not a prisoner—not bound at least."

"He run gantlet soon—there prisoners," replied Wild Cat, pointing out those of the whites who were bound.

"Is this possible, Indian? Have you and your people all turned against my people?"

"He so. Canada Fadder have more gun, powder, blanket and whisky to give Ojibway than Yankee Fadder have."

"I am sorry to hear this, Wild Cat, for the judgment of the Great Spirit will surely come upon you. He will send the dread Spirit of the Woods to slay you one by one."

"Waugh! One Arm can not frighten Wild Cat and his warriors. The Spirit of the Woods is a coward, and will not come where there are many brave Ojibways."

"You are mistaken, Wild Cat. The Spirit can come among you and yet you can not see him, for he is like the wind. I see you have many pale-face captives—even women and children in yonder bower. And now I advise you to release them, Wild Cat, if you would live to see your squaw again."

"One Arm talks well, but he can not advise Wild Cat. Let the white scout leave, for my braves look angry upon him."

"I come with peace in my heart," replied the scout, "but Wild Cat mistrusts me; does he fear me?"

"No Ojibway fears One Arm. He carries no weapons because he can not fight. The Great Spirit made him with but one arm, and the hand that grasps the tomahawk and scalping-knife, and the finger that pulls the trigger, he kept that they might not be raised against the red-men. And so the red-men would make the Great Spirit angry if they should slay One Arm, for he is an example of what will come to all the pale-faces that strike the Indians down."

"I don't believe in any such doctrine. Wild Cat," said a burly French half breed, who

pushed his way through the crowd at this juncture; "I'll bet this feller kills his Ojibway every day."

"How? Can Yellowface prove what he says?" responded Wild Cat.

"Yes; wouldn't it be proof to find a knife or pistol upon the person of One Arm?"

"It would," replied Wild Cat; "the brain of Yellowface is long. Would One Arm object to being searched?"

"Would it make any difference if I did object? Are not the Ojibways many and strong—all got two hands and arms?"

"One Arm does not answer my question straight," replied Wild Cat, as though he suspected the scout's reply to be an evasion.

"I will not consent to be searched, though I will offer no resistance," the scout replied.

"Theu let Yellowface search One Arm, for it was he that brought the matter up."

"I will do it with the greatest pleasure," said the half-breed, advancing toward the scout, with an air of self-assurance.

One-Armed Alf quietly submitted to a careful search of his person from head to foot, rendering the insolent half-breed all the assistance possible.

The search occupied but a few moments, and, when it was concluded, the look that settled upon the half-breed's face indicated his disappointment and baffled triumph, for he found nothing—not even a jack-knife.

And, to still add to the villain's rage and mortification, his comrades burst into a peal of derisive laughter, that called forth a string of indignant oaths. Nor was his rage permitted to cool with this, for One-Armed Alf joined his comrades in their laugh, and this set him fairly foaming.

"Cuss your picter, you white skin!" he fairly howled, striking an attitude of defiance; "I shall take no sneers and insults from your likes. If you hain't got but one arm, you needn't think you've license to insult me."

"I did not intend to offend you, Yellowface," said the scout, "but if you are inclined to take it so, I shall take no pains to retract, for your brutal impudence does not merit an apology."

"Sacré! Blarst me skin if you ain't got to swaller that, or you'll never leave here without a bruised head, you rumpin', long-legged sneak!" raved the vindictive half-breed, approaching Alf, as though he were going to devour him on the spot.

"I have heard a jackass bray before," coolly replied the scout—a retort that added new fuel to the renegade's wrath, and the other savages gathered around the disputants in anticipation of some savage sport.

"Thar's no use sayin' any more, Long-legs," said Yellowface; "you've said enuff to warrant you a sound slappin', and now take it, too."

So saying, the irate half-breed made a furious leap into the air, aiming a desperate blow with his open hand at the face of the scout. But he had reckoned without his host. The scout, being on the alert, dexterously warded off the blow with his left and only arm with such power and skill that the half-breed was sent spinning away fully twenty feet.

A wild, jeering laugh pealed from the lips of the spectators, whose sole attention was now drawn to the two combatants.

Yellowface quickly regained his feet, and, stung to madness and fury by the taunts of his friends, made another desperate lunge at the scout with clinched fist. But he met with a reception in the shape of the scout's huge fist, that caused him to see a galaxy of stars he had never seen before, and sent him to the earth with great violence.

Yells and shouts of laughter again pealed from the lips of the spectators, while curses of frenzied rage escaped the lips of the defeated half-breed.

Calmly One-Armed Alf stood regarding his antagonist with a keen, watchful gaze, his face growing white and rigid with some terrible inward emotion.

Yellowface again gathered himself up, and, bent upon revenge of the severest nature, he drew a double-barreled pistol and leveled it at the scout's heart. But the latter, seeing his danger, quickly threw forward the end of his long cane and struck aside the arm of the half-breed, but the jar of the stroke seemed to have caused both barrels to go off, for there was heard the double report of a fire-arm. But to the surprise and horror of all, One-Armed Alf stood erect, unharmed, while Yellowface, staggering backward, clutching at his breast, uttered a groan of agony and fell heavily to the earth, the blood spurting in crimson jets from the wound in his breast.

The savages were completely astounded by this strange turn in affairs, and for full a minute they stood motionless, gazing around them, as if expecting the rush of a concealed foe. One-Armed Alf, too, cast a quick, uneasy glance around him, then leaning forward, with his hand upon his long cane, he gazed down at the quivering form of Yellowface and said:

"Yellowface is dead. The Great Spirit became angry because he drew his pistol upon One Arm, and he turned Wild Cat's own bullet and sent it through his heart. The Ojibways

can not say One Arm slew him, for all he attempted to kill me."

"One Arm speaks the truth," replied Wild Cat, seriously impressed. "The Spirit of the Woods is abroad with death in his heart. But, for every victim that he finds among the Ojibways, a pale-face shall die, too."

A murmur of applause met this declaration.

"Let the young hunter, then, be tied to a tree and burned alive."

All turned toward Koder, or rather to where he had been left standing, for Koder was gone—Koder was nowhere to be seen, and it was then that a cry of rage rang out from savage lips.

A number of warriors darted away like hounds that have just lost a trail, their bodies half-bent and their burning, ferret-like eyes searching every foot of ground.

While the attention of the Ojibways was thus engaged, a figure upon hands and knees, crept from the shadow of the woods toward the point where Colonel Bliss and his fellow-men were bound. With a keen knife he cut their bonds, whispering something to each one as he did so. The prisoners still sat as motionless as though their bonds had not been severed; but the skulker arose to his feet and strode boldly into camp.

And the skulker was our old friend, Jack Eller, the hero of Brandywine!

CHAPTER XXVII.

HOT WORDS AND DEADLY BLOWS.

THE presence of old Jack Eller at this moment and under the existing circumstances, in the Indian camp, was attended with great daring and fearlessness of consequences. The savages, enraged by the death of Yellowface and the escape of Koder, no sooner caught sight of him than they turned upon him with all the fury of demons depicted upon their dusky faces.

He was immediately surrounded by those of the band who had not gone in search of Koder; still he maintained the daring defiance which characterized his intrusion into the camp.

"Keep back here, ye red 'ell pups; keep back, or I'll bu'st the hull kit of ye, tooth and nail!"

"Waugh!" exclaimed Wild Cat; "the old white-hair is the coward that killed Yellowface."

"Yer a 'tarnal liar, so ye are, you nigger-head, ye! It was the Spirit of the Woods that chucked it to the greasy varlet, and now look sharp or I'll call in the Spirit and have him snatch you cold, in a jiffy."

The savages shrunk back appalled. The name of the dread avenger was at times like that sufficient to fill them with terror. This, however, was only momentary. Wild Cat drew his tomahawk, and advancing toward the old hero of Brandywine, raised it over his head and said:

"The old white-head has spoken with power in his words. He has said that he could call the Spirit of the Woods. The red-men have never seen him. Let the old white-hair call him here that we may see him."

The old borderman and One-Armed Alf exchanged glances.

"Suppose I refuse ye, Wild Cat, what then?" he finally replied.

"The tomahawk of Wild Cat will drink the blood of the old white-head. I have spoken."

"Well, red-skin, if I must, reckon I must, but I swear I'm afraid the Spirit will kill some of you. It's an orful thing, and likes Injin blood like sin."

"Let the old white-head not spend words, or he shall die," interrupted the impatient chief.

"Beg pardon, Wild Pussy; and so now if you'll just turn yer eyes toward that tree-top and look sharp fur about forty years, you'll see the Spirit descending out of a cloud with a dew-drop on his nose."

The savage turned their eyes toward the tree-top as directed, but their knowledge of the civilized calendar and measurement of time must have been imperfectly understood, unless they had construed Eller's stated time for the Spirit to appear, into that of an instant.

"Come, oh Spirit of the Woods!" cried Eller, raising his voice to a shrill, harsh pitch; "come, bloody snoozer, and gobble up these red Ojibs, tooth and nail, foot and—"

He did not finish the sentence. The clear, sharp report of a rifle rung out, apparently in their very midst, and Wild Cat staggering backward with an unearthly cry, fell dead at the feet of his comrades.

A glance at his naked breast which lay plainly revealed by the glare of the camp-fires, showed a tiny bullet-hole in the region of the heart from which the blood was welling. It told the savages that he had been slain by the Spirit of the Woods who had entered the camp unseen by mortal eye.

With faces upon which was stamped mute terror, the savages gazed first at Eller, then the Giant Scout. The former stood with empty hands where he had stood when Wild Cat fell, and the latter was still standing where he had been for the last ten minutes, still leaning upon his cane, regarding the scene before him with silent wonder and surprise.

For full five minutes a dead silence reigned.

Then from their bonds arose those of our captive friends whom Eller had freed, and with a wild shout, attacked the terrified savages with such weapons as they could snatch up.

Jack Eller and One-Armed Alf joined with them in the conflict, and too, the scout's dog took an active and deadly part in the struggle.

The savages were taken completely by surprise, and were at once routed and driven away into the woods. Our friends, however, did not pursue them. In fact, it would have been useless; besides time was too precious.

Two of the whites had been slightly wounded, and as soon as these could be attended to as well as circumstances would admit, the whole party broke camp, and under the guidance of One-Armed Alf, took their way westward through the lonely halls of the grim old woods.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

JABEZ MUGGINS APPEARS.

THE scene upon which Captain North and his two fair companions, Hellice and Margery, gazed as they stood at the foot of the cliff, in the uncertain glare of the midnight moon, was one of intense agony, and intended to awake the deepest feelings of sympathy in the hearts of the three fugitives.

It was the torture of a man who had been stripped to the waist of all his clothing, and lashed, face downward, upon a log, where a little jet of water fell in a constant stream on the back and head, causing the most excruciating agony, and those awful groans of distress.

To any one unacquainted with the nature of this punishment, the situation of this helpless man would not have seemed at all painful. But it was a mode of punishment—the constant drop or fall of water upon the head—that has no parallel in the catalogue of tortures, and one that found its origin in the dark ages of Christian persecution.

"Oh, Paul!" cried the terrified Margery, clinging closely to her lover's side, "that is no decoy—there is nothing feigned about that man's suffering cries. Haste, Paul, and save him, will you not?"

"I will most assuredly, my dear Margery," he replied; and, leaving the maidens, he hastened down to the suffering man's side, and with his sword cut the thongs that bound him to the log. But the man seemed totally unconscious of his release, for he lay perfectly still, moaning out his agony.

Captain North saw that he was insensible to all but his intense suffering, and so he lifted him from the log, and carried him out and laid him on a little grass-plot where Hellice and Margery stood.

The instant he was taken from under the waterfall he began to revive, though the captain was compelled to chafe his limbs and temples some time to renew the circulation of his chilled blood, and restore entire consciousness.

Finally he recovered sufficiently as to be enabled to sit up and talk, though his words were rather thick and incoherent.

"Why, Hellice!" suddenly exclaimed Margery Bliss, as the victim of the cascade turned his face so that the moonlight fell upon it, "don't you know who it is? It is the whisky-trader, Jabez Muggins."

Hellice scanned the face of the man closely, and saw that Margery was right—it was the whisky-trader.

"Where am I? How came I here? and who the creation are you, anyhow?" were the first questions Muggins asked, as he gazed around him in a bewilderment.

"If you'll tell me how you came to be bound under that waterfall, I may be enabled to answer some of your questions," replied Captain North.

"Seein' as what you wear British duds, I reckon you know some of these things, don't you, say, youngster?"

"I do not, sir," replied the captain, in a tone of assurance.

"We can bear witness, Mr. Muggins, that Captain North, our friend and protector, knew nothing of your situation and suffering until drawn here by your cries," said Hellice.

"Upon my word and honor, which arn't much, after all!" exclaimed Muggins, who now, for the first time, noticed the maidens, "if yere arn't two female ghirls! Whar, in the tarnation hev I see'd yer poorty little faces afore, ghirls?"

"At Mackinaw, I presume," said Hellice.

"That's the identikul place, by the smoke of 'Cattypetel,' it are. Hi-ye! I know you now, chicks. You're ole Kurnel Bliss's ghirl, Margery, and you're Hellice—Hellice—Hellice—somethin', no dif'rence what; but if you 'uns say that chap in the British duds don't know any thing 'bout this piece of business, with me, Jabez Muggins, Russian nabob, I'll swaller all offensive words I've sed, and ji't say that, two low-lifted mud-snooters, w'aring Britisher clothes, are jist the very varmints that set me up in that 'are chin-music situation."

"Did you hear their names?" asked North.

"Yas; but I don't remember 'em now—think one war sumthin' like Tom—Tom Tickler."

"Tom Thickler," corrected North; "I know him well. He is one of the king's most effec-

tive tools, sent out to incite the savages to war and vengeance. But why did they bind you in such a place? I have always taken you to be a warm friend of the English and Indians."

"Now, see yere, young Britisher, arn't you tryin' to pump this ole cock of the fodder walk?"

"I assure you, Muggins, I am not. I have this night renounced the king of England and the British flag, and am on my way to Point Michigan with these girls, and then for Detroit. When I reach there I shall enlist in the American army, and fight for the land that holds all that is near and dear to me."

This declaration, Hellice saw, set Margery's heart in a wild, joyous flutter, while her eyes sought the ground, a timid flush suffusing her pretty face to the very temples.

"Wal then, I s'pose you're makin' luv to one of these 'ere ghirls, and that's what's bringin' ye over," replied Muggins, in his blunt, thoughtless manner. "You be a good-lookin' chap, or, if I war a gal I'd say, scat, ye dog. Then it's a mighty good ijee to bring the red-coats and the red skins over to our side, but the best perswashun I kin use is cold lead. To speak the truth, I'm down, tooth and nail on the darned Britishers, and I hate ther red-skins wus than sin and p'izen."

"This news is surprising to us, Mr. Muggins," said Margery, "for we always supposed you were a warm friend of the English and Indians. In fact the settlers and the army have mistrusted you of late of being a spy in the service of the allies."

"Wal, my little chick, thar's whar 'em Mackinawers war mistooked, for I'm the spy of one of the deadliest enemies the red-skins have got on all creation, and the warmest friend the white folks ever had on the peninsula of Michigan. That's what I, Jalsey Muggins, are, and to save the life of two friends, ole Jack Eller, of P'int Michigan, and Cap. St. John of Mack—"

"Captain St. John!" cried Hellice, her young heart fluttering wildly; "where is he? Where is Captain St. John?"

"Thar, thar, chick, don't take on," replied Muggins; "I see who loves the captain now. Wal, he is the finest, smackupest feller I ever run across, Hellice, and I hope he's anchored safe with friends at this time. I got him outen Injin clutches 't other night, an' got kotched doin' it by 'em two red-mouthed, gibberin' Englishers, who seein' as what I wer'n't much in p'int of physical strength, seized onto me, and havin' scooted me hereaways, tied me to that log under that stream of water, whar I spent some orful ticklish moments. But oh, cuss ther pictur's of 'em, but I'll make 'em think they're in the sulphur diggin's when I git a chance at their niggery carcasses, so I will—whoopee! whoopee! whoopee! and the trader, as if to give expression to his recuperated and exultant spirit sprung to his feet and waltzed away and back on airy foot."

"You think then that the captain is safe, do you?" asked Hellice.

"Ya-as," drawled Muggins; "if he arn't safe it's not my fault, for, as I said afore, I came dogged nigh kilterin' out to save him. Ole Jack Eller war with him, and I guess they're together?"

"Then your professional whisky-trading was only a ruse to enable you to play spy for the whites, was it?" asked Margery.

"It was, little honey-bud, and a slappin' good thing I've made of both spyin' and whisky-tradin'."

"But whose employ were you in?" questioned Hellice.

"There—now, my little starry-eyes, you've asked a leadin' question; howsumever, I'll just say it war the best friend you've got in the world that I worked for."

"That's saying a great deal, but, as you evade a direct answer, I will not insist on knowing more," replied Hellice.

"Allow me to say, friends," said Captain North, "that if you are all three ready, we had better continue our journey. We must put as great a distance as possible between us and the enemy, during the night, for during the day we will, in all probability, have to remain in concealment."

"I am ready to go on," said Margery, and her words were repeated by Hellice.

"Then, Muggins," said the captain, turning to the whisky-trader, "if you are acquainted with these parts, you will please take the lead, will you not, toward Point Michigan?"

"To be sure I will, my laddie, for I know these diggin's as well as a frog knows how to sing, and I'm ready to sail. I want to see them two little dew-drops safe and sound at the P'int, and I'll bu'st every narve to git them thar. So come on, little buds; foller me; and captain, you bring up the rear in good military style, and then we'll be off with,"

"A whoopee! whoopee! whoopee! whoopee!"

The trader glanced at the sky to note the position of the stars, then shaped his course and set off through the woods, followed by North and the two maidens.

The journey was a tedious one, but nothing further occurred during the remainder of the night to cause them delay.

The morning dawned clear and bright, and filled the hearts of the fugitives with hope and promise; and they would have continued on in daylight had Muggins not discovered the fresh trail of a party of Indians whom North was afraid were in search of them. So they sought a hiding place in a little wooded dell where they decided to await the coming of night in which to conclude their journey.

They had been concealed but a few minutes when the dull thud of hoofs broke suddenly upon their ears, and the next moment they all saw a horseman sweep out from the distance and down apast them away into the gloom of the woods again with the speed of the wind.

Three of the little party recognized the horseman at a glance. It was Captain Philip St. John, and the horse he bestrode, Captain North recognized as that of the commander of the English army, General Brock!

A cry arose to Hellice Arvine's lips, but the promptness of the shrewd whisky-trader checked its utterance. The pounding of other hoofs had arrested his attention, and warned him of approaching danger.

The next instant a squad of English cavalry swept apast them in swift pursuit of the young American, the earth fairly trembling beneath the tramp of the iron-hoofed chargers.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A RIFT OF LIGHT.

As Darcy Mayfield stood alone in the Specter Skiff, deserted for the second time by Hannah, that mysterious woman with masked face, something of the truth began to dawn upon his bewildered mind. A rift of light began to break through the cloud of mystery that surrounded the little bark.

For the first time he noticed that the bottom of the boat was a few inches above the surface of the water when it should have been several inches below. This led to the discovery that there was a false bottom in the craft, with two doors in it, one opening up and the other down into a hold below. These however, had been kept concealed hitherto by flakes of dry moss that carpeted the bottom of the boat. By some means or other this had become displaced, disclosing the doors leading into the hold beneath. And even while he stood regarding one of these with mingled surprise and curiosity, he saw it thrown quickly open upon its noiseless hinges, and Hannah, the Maid of Michigan, spring up from the hidden chamber beneath, into the open boat.

Quickly closing the door, she turned and started violently when she found herself face to face with Darcy Mayfield—saw that the secret of the Specter Skiff was a secret to him no longer. But, as she recovered from her momentary confusion, a peal of soft musical laughter rippled from her lips, and she said:

"So at last, Mr. Garfield, you have solved the mystery of the Specter Skiff, I observe, which you will doubtless admit is not much of a secret, after all."

"But I will admit, Hannah, that it is a decidedly clever arrangement—this Specter Skiff. I now see where you were concealed when I was brought aboard the craft by the two English soldiers, Kruler and Belden. But is it possible that you are alone here upon this lake?"

"It is not, sir," she replied, speaking in a low tone. "I have a brother and a friend in the cabin below, who have been on the boat all the while. And I shall now call them out, for seeing you are much better I am going to tell you a secret—the one I promised you."

She raised one of the trap-doors and spoke a word or two, when two men made their appearance from below. One of them, like Hannah, wore a mask; the other did not, for he was an entire stranger to Darcy. He was a little, wiry old man, of some seventy years, with snow-white hair and whiskers; a thin, sharp face, but high, intellectual forehead; keen black eyes and large, expressive mouth—all of which bore striking evidence of foreign nationality.

"Let my friends be seated, and I will introduce them, by and by, to Mr. Garfield," said Hannah.

The two men sat down.

"Not long ago, Mr. Garfield," said the masked woman, "I listened to your story of your life troubles, brought about by the machinations of one Joshua Pellington, of England; and of the subsequent attack of the Indians on your home, and the mysterious disappearance of your wife and her brother during the attack. Now, I will open my story by asking you if you have any idea what became of them?"

"I presume they were killed, though I have lived in hopes that Maria and her brother are still alive, and for two years have I and their brother Charles been hunting the peninsula of Michigan over in hopes of finding them among the Indians, or, at least, some clew to their whereabouts."

"Then Charles Bradbury escaped death on that fearful night?" Hannah inquired.

"Yes; though he was a terrible sufferer by it; but he will make himself even with his enemies yet. He knows every face that he confronted on that terrible night."

"He must have a powerful faculty for retaining faces in memory," replied Hannah, turning her eyes to avert the strange, wild gaze that Darcy had suddenly fixed upon her; "but, Walter Garfield, why have you changed your name to Darcy Mayfield?"

"Simply to carry out the work I have before me, and to elude the suspicions of my enemies."

"Were you ever married under that name?"

"No, never! No woman can ever fill in my heart my adored Maria's place."

"Have you hopes of ever meeting her again?"

"I have."

"Then your hopes shall be realized." Hannah said, her tone altering to a low, tremulous key; "Walter, I am your Maria—your wife!"

"Oh, great Heaven! Is it possible—my darling wife?" he cried, starting up.

She tore the mask from her face and advanced toward him.

"Thank God, dear Walter," she murmured, as she felt herself again clasped to the noble, manly breast of Walter Garfield, her husband, whom she had mourned as dead.

The meeting of husband and wife was one of rapturous joy and happiness, that can better be imagined than described. Not until that moment did Walter Garfield, as we will hereafter know Darcy Mayfield, know that his wife was living, although Hannah's voice at times sounded strangely familiar, and during their sojourn together she had uttered words that led him to suspect that she knew something of Maria at least. On the other hand, Maria, as we will now call Hannah, the Maid of Michigan, recognized her young husband before he was taken aboard the boat by Kruler and Belden.

After the first raptures of the re-union were passed, Marie said:

"This man, dear Walter, in the mask, is my brother Amos."

The young man threw aside his mask, and, although time had wrought greater changes upon his face than Maria's, Walter recognized him at once.

"And this man," continued Maria, turning to the little old man, "is Anselm Foretti, by birth an Italian, and at heart a noble old man. For forty years he was private secretary to uncle Garvon Lessingford, and soon after the death of the latter at his home in England, Mr. Foretti was discharged from service by Sir Joshua Pellington, who was appointed administrator of uncle Lessingford's estate. Mr. Foretti is a mechanic, also, of no mean ability, as the construction of this craft will bear witness."

"Indeed," said Walter, taking the bony hand of Foretti, "I am happy to meet the man whose skill, displayed in the Specter Skiff, has proven a terror to the red-skins and a mystery to the whites."

"Thanks, thanks, young man, for the compliment," replied Foretti, speaking English perfectly.

"Well, now, dear Maria," continued Walter, "I want to know all about how it is that you and Amos are here alive, and I have not known it before, and yet been with you upon this boat two or three days."

"It would take me a week, Walter, to tell in detail all that has transpired with us since that memorable night when the Indians swept down upon our happy home near Erie. I can, however, tell you in substance the story now."

They all seated themselves upon the thwarts of the boat, when Maria began:

"We were taken prisoners that awful night and carried over to Canada. From there we were conveyed to England by Sir Joshua Pellington, who claimed to others that we were minors under his guardianship. After we arrived in England, he promised me my freedom if I would marry his son Rudolph. His object in this was to get a direct hold on the Lessingford estate, to which I was sole heir. But I refused to comply with his request, and for so doing was kept a prisoner a long time, and would probably have been a prisoner to-day but for Anselm Foretti here. He suspected some villainy on the part of Pellington when he discharged him, and so he—Foretti—kept a close watch upon all of his movements; and when he discovered that Amos and I were prisoners, he laid a plan by which we escaped from his power, and fled to America.

"As soon as we had landed in this country we began searching for you, dear Walter, and brother Charles. After several months' search we got onto the track of a person whom we had reason to hope was you. We learned that the man was a hunter in the Territory of Michigan, and so made our way into these parts; but, before we could accomplish anything, we heard, to our surprise and terror, that Sir Joshua Pellington was upon our trail. This stopped our search, and we were compelled to take refuge in an obscure place, where the idea of the Specter Skiff was first suggested to our old friend and companion's mind, by vague stories of specter canoes and avenging spirits haunting the waters of Michigan, and filling the hearts of the savages and settlers with terror. Procuring the necessary implements and material at a settlement, Mr. Foretti constructed the boat; and it has proven a greater success than we had anticipated. For nearly a year we have been

cruising up and down the eastern coast of this lake, subsisting on game from the forest and lake, with an occasional supply from some settlement, where Mr. Foretti or Amos would go disguised.

"Never until about one week ago did we know that you were certainly alive and living at Point Michigan under the name of Darcy Mayfield. I also learned that you were married again, and this is the reason that I did not make myself known to you when I first met you on board this boat. I thought, if you had given me up as dead, and was married to another and living happily, I would not break in upon your home, but go away and—"

"Heaven bless you, sweet Maria! No woman but you has or ever will occupy a place in my heart," interrupted Walter, clasping her to his breast.

"I thank God for all this, dear Walter. Everything tells me you have suffered at heart in the past three years, as I have. But I hope our darkest night is over, and a bright dawn of a happy future is beaming upon us. You say brother Charles is living?"

"He was, the last time I saw him, though he may not be now, for I was dragged away from his side in the midst of a desperate, deadly conflict with British and Indians."

"Oh, I pray God will keep him alive as he has you, dear Walter. Charles was always such a noble fellow, so strong, so brave, and kind-hearted. But—" and she turned to the old Italian—"what is our course now, Anselm?"

The old man took a pocket compass from a small pouch at his side, and having consulted it, said:

"Sou-sou-east. We'll soon sight land."

"What part of the coast?"

"Five leagues to the northward of Point Michigan."

"I am glad of that," said Walter; "for I am anxious to know how the good settlers at the Point are getting along, and what became of Charles Bradbury."

"Heavens, look there!" suddenly cried Amos Bradbury.

The exclamation was occasioned by sight of a small vessel, flying the English colors at its mast-head, which put into view from behind a large island to the north of them.

"Holy Father!" cried Anselm Foretti, in accents of surprise and terror; "it is the Rover, Sir Joshua Pellington's own vessel and privateer! We must work or die now, my friends!"

He had scarcely uttered the last word when a cloud of smoke was seen to puff out from the privateer's bow-gun, and the next instant a cannon ball went skipping along the surface of the water so close to their boat that a shower of spray was dashed over them.

And now began an exciting chase over the waters of Michigan, between the famed Specter Skiff and the English privateer, the former commanded by Hannah, the Maid of Michigan, and the latter by her persecutor, Sir Joshua Pellington.

CHAPTER XXX.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

In the deepest silence Captain North and his three companions remained in the thicket while the English soldier galloped on past them, into the gloom of the distance in pursuit of Captain St. John.

"Oh, I pray Philip will escape!" cried Hellice, with her hands clasped over her young heart.

"His chances are good, Miss Arvine," said Captain North. "He is mounted on one of the fleetest horses in the English army—that of General Brock; and how he came by the animal is a question to me."

"I'll bet a royal ole spasm from my lost knowledge-box that they've let the Cap give them the slip in that whip-pe-slash way," said Jabez Muggins.

"Then it is evident that Brock is not far away with his army," said Hellice.

"In coarse it are," replied Muggins. "The bull English army is on its way toward Detroit, this blessed minit, while Blackbird and a gol-smashin' lot of Indians are skinnin' out for Chicago. Oh, gorry, I tell you it's gorin' to be a rantankerous hot ole time. Hair and claret will fly like all Jerusalem; and when we git goin's tooth at the Pint, oh, won't ole Jabez go in on his muscles with—

"A whoop tee doodle, whoop tee doo—"

"Hist! Easy, friend Muggins," said North, in an undertone; "too loud talking will bring the very dangers down upon us that we have come here to avert."

"Beg pard, Cap. This old tongue of mine is a mighty unruly thing—hard to manage, but I'll hold her now or bu'st."

The maidens could not repress a smile at the man's unconscious rudeness of language; for his quaint humor and odd expression did much to keep their attention diverted from the depressing thoughts that their surrounding dangers at times engendered.

The day dragged by on leaden feet, and when the shadows of night at last fell, the little party stole from the thicket and resumed their westward journey.

They moved on until near midnight, when they were suddenly brought to a halt by the sound of footsteps.

They came to a sudden halt and in breathless silence listened. They could hear the soft patter of feet, evidently approaching.

"That's a wolf's pit-a-pat," whispered Jabez.

"Hark! I hear other footfalls," exclaimed North in an undertone.

The maidens drew nearer each other and with bated breath listened and watched.

The massive tread of human feet can now be distinctly heard, but that soft patter can be heard preceding it. This, however, soon passes them, and in the vicinity of the sound they can now see a dull speck of fire floating along through the darkness, and behind this they can see the dark, colossal figure of a man stalking through the black, pathless wilderness like a shadowy giant.

"By Jupiter! exclaimed North in a low whisper, "that is the very figure and guiding speck of fire that Malagua told me was the Spirit of the Wilderness."

Hellice and Margery shuddered and crept closer to the captain's side, while Jabez Muggins uttered, through sheer recklessness, a low whistle of surprise. Captain North nudged him sharply for his blunder, but it was too late. The whistle had been heard. That dull speck of fire ceased to move, and the shadowy giant came to a halt and stood in an attitude of intense listening.

"Whewt! whewt!" again whistled the reckless Muggins.

"Hullo, Jabez, is that you?" came a voice from the giant's lips.

"Bet your moccasins on it, my dear old pard," replied Muggins; "so jist waltz this way and give us a wag of your paw."

The giant's footsteps were now heard approaching, and as he drew nearer them, our friends saw that his proportions grew less and less until he dwindled down to the size of a well-proportioned man. The party had all seen him before, and recognized him as One-Armed Alf, the Giant Scout.

"You're the last man I expected to meet, Jabez," he said, "and pray, who are those with you?"

Jabez Muggins introduced each of his friends, and when cordial greetings had been exchanged all around, Margery Bliss inquired:

"Alf, can you tell me any thing of my friends?"

"I can; they are all safe at Point Michigan."

"Thank God!" cried the maidens, in a breath.

"War you in'search of us Alf?" asked Muggins.

"I was," responded the scout, "though, at the time you gave your signal call I was trailing a red-skin whom I have reason to think now is trying to cut you off from safety."

"But what was the meaning of that dull speck of fire just ahead of you?" asked Captain North.

"It was a bit of phosphorus attached to my dog's tail," replied the scout; "you see, I trust to the dog to follow the trail, and in the darkness, all I have to do is to follow after that speck of fire."

"And the dog's tail," added Muggins; "but, what's the tickle now, ole pard?"

"Do you know what became of St. John?" the scout asked.

Jabez told him all about the flight of the captain, and his being pursued by the English.

"And you have heard nothing from Darcy Mayfield?"

"Nothing, Alf."

"Poor fellow!" sighed the scout, sadly. "I presume he perished in the flames that night at my cabin."

"Yas, I'm afeard so," replied Jabez; "but, do you know what became of your nigger sarvint?"

"Nothing," replied the scout, indulging in a low, silent laugh, which seemed to puzzle Captain North and the maidens as to its meaning.

"Nor nothing of the Spirit of the Woods?"

"Nothing."

This time Jabez Muggins laughed a strange, peculiar laugh.

"Well, my friends," said One-Armed Alf, changing the subject, "it stands us in hand to be moving from here. The Indians are swarming thick through the woods. And I would suggest for our greater safety, that we keep due west until we reach the lake, thence by water to Point Michigan."

"Thunder! these gals can't swim, pard," replied Jabez, in a jocular tone.

"I have a couple of canoes concealed not far from where we will touch the lake."

"Oh!—well, heave ahead, One Arm, and we're the folks that'll prance behind."

Without further words the Giant Scout took the lead, and the little party was once more under way.

In the course of an hour's journeying a dim twilight appeared through the trees before, and in a few minutes more the broad waters of Lake Michigan more unfolded to their view.

The scout had no difficulty in finding one of his canoes, which he at once launched and paddled around to where he had left his friends, whom he immediately took aboard. Then he pushed out from shore into the lake.

A dense fringe of wild rice-plants growing out several rods into the water, shut them off from the open lake, and it was with some difficulty that they made their way through these. But, at length, the obstruction was passed, and the boat floated out into the broad, glimmering waters.

The moon was shining and threw its dazzling luster over the lake, while it tipped the foliage of the dark belt of trees along the shore with a sheen of frosted silver.

The change from the dark, somber woods, and incessant toiling through thicket and brier, to the moonlit waters and gently gliding boat, was a pleasant one to the poor, weary fugitives; but they were not calculated to enjoy it long unmolested by fears of dangers.

They had been upon the lake scarcely ten minutes when the scout's dog, which had been allowed a place in the stern of the canoe, set up a low, uneasy whining, which his master readily interpreted as a warning of danger.

Quickly the scout swept the surrounding waters, and to his dismay, discovered a canoe filled with Indians, pulling along within the shadow of the rice plants toward them.

"There are Indians after us," he said, apparently unmoved by the discovery, "and we will have to pull for the shelter of the reeds in order to elude them."

Amid the whistling of savage bullets the canoe was at once driven back into the tall rice-plants; then standing half-erect, the man buried the canoe forward by pulling at the reeds hand-over-hand.

In this manner they proceeded deeper and deeper into the labyrinths of the tangled, miniature forest, until they finally struck a path cut out by the otter through the reeds, into this narrow thoroughfare the scout turned his canoe, and was enabled to journey on almost noiselessly. For fully an hour the canoe crept hither and thither through the woods, until all but the old scout himself had become bewildered.

At length they paused and listened, but all was silent save the piping of insects on the beach hard by, and the gentle rustling of the reeds by the fairy fingers of the night wind. So the canoe was pushed silently on, and in a few minutes debouched into a little opening or glade in that wilderness of reeds where the moonlight fell unobstructed. Here the scout paused with the intention of remaining until all dangers had passed; and so he ran his canoe close along the south margin of the glade, where the reeds, courting the open light of the opening, had grown taller and inclined inward so as to afford an admirable shelter while our friends could still command a view of the opening.

"Hero, I think, the cunning knaves will not find us," said the scout, in hopes of allaying the fears of the maidens, who were now sobbing in each other's arms with hopeless despair.

"We have struggled against fate so long, Alf," said Hellice, "without reward, that it seems as though we were doomed to die before we reach Point Michigan."

"Ah, me, Hellice," said the kind-hearted scout, sympathetically, "I know you have had a hard journey of it, but now that you are nearly through, keep up a little longer and trust to God."

"How far do you think we are from the Point, friend scout?" asked Captain North.

"Not over four leagues, I dare say. But, what now, Sultan, my good dog—what now?"

The animal had suddenly thrust his muzzle upward and began sniffing the air, as if he detected the presence of danger, and when he set up a low, plaintive whine, his master knew that all was not right. So he enjoined the strictest silence upon his companions, and bent his head and listened.

Somewhere within that wilderness of reeds he could hear a faint rustling sound, as though something was crawling through them. The sound grew plainer and plainer each moment. It appeared to be approaching, and was, without a doubt, a canoe making its way through the reeds.

"It may be an Indian canoe, and if so, it is going to pass near, if not directly across this opening. In either case, however, let the strictest silence prevail, for, if we are passed unobserved, we will have no difficulty thereafter. Down, Sultan, down!"

The dog had started suddenly up, as though he had detected new dangers; and upon listening, our friends discovered that a second canoe was approaching.

The discovery made the scout very uneasy. Should both canoes enter the glade, and the occupants discover their presence, it might result fatally to them; for the fugitives were in no condition to fight, not one of them possessing a weapon, unless it was Captain North, who still carried his saber.

The moments that followed were moments of extreme anxiety and uncertainty. The dull, raking rustling of the two canoes among the reeds could still be heard approaching; and at length, the surface of the water became ruffled by little waves chasing each other out from the opposite side of the opening.

"Look sharp, friends," cautioned the scout; "they are coming."

He had scarcely spoken, when the reeds on the opposite side of the glade, were seen to part in two places, and the sharp prows of two canoes glide out almost side by side into the moonlit opening.

Each canoe contained but a single occupant, and each of these appeared to be entirely ignorant of the other's presence, until they had entered the glade, for they dropped their paddles, turned in their canoes and glared at each other, with wild surprise and amazement written upon each face. And it was then that our friends started with a sudden exclamation of surprise, for they saw that one of those occupants was Captain Philip St. John, the other, a powerful Ojibway warrior!

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE SPIRIT OF THE WOODS.

A CRY of joy and terror escaped Hellice Arvine's lips at sight of her young lover, Philip St. John, and the danger that menaced him at the moment; but her cry was too late to stop the movements of the Ojibway, who arose to his feet and with a wild yell sprung out into St. John's canoe. Then the two grappled in a deadly embrace and a fearful struggle began.

For a moment the canoe rocked violently upon the water, but, at length, the combatants lost their balance and fell overboard.

A wild, piercing scream now escaped Hellice's lips, and she sunk down, almost unconscious, at Margery's feet.

"Go, Sultan, go!" suddenly commanded the scout, touching his dog upon the back.

Swift as a lightning's flash almost, the faithful dog shot from the canoe out into the water. For a moment he was lost from view beneath the waves, but, when he arose to the surface again, he struck out to where the two foes were struggling.

The dog, knowing the true foe by instinct, immediately seized the red-skin by the nape of the neck, burying his fangs deep in the muscles and tendons.

The savage seemed paralyzed by the gripe of this unknown foe, and he relinquished his hold upon the captain at once. The latter was, himself, entirely ignorant from whence his unexpected assistance had come; but when he suddenly heard his name called by a familiar voice—the voice of One-Armed Alf—all became plain to him. It was the scout's dog that had seized the red-skin, and he proceeded to assist the noble beast to dispatch the foe. But his help was not needed. Sultan understood his work too well, and with a few vigorous shakes the neck of the savage was disjointed, and he sunk down, lifeless, in the water.

Then the dog returned to his master, followed by Captain St. John, who was soon taken aboard the fugitive craft.

One-Armed Alf was not entirely forgetful of their dangers during the few moments of joy and congratulation that followed Philip's escape. He well realized that the noise of the recent conflict would not escape the ears of the other savages, whom he knew to be in the vicinity, and draw them in that direction. So he enjoined silence upon them, and again turned attention to their surrounding dangers. He listened, but all was silent, and when several moments had elapsed and no sound of approaching enemies broke the silence, he turned to St. John and said:

"I presume, captain, you have passed through the flint mills since we last parted."

"I have, most assuredly. I was taken a prisoner twice—once by the Indians and once by the British. The first time I was liberated by my dear friend, Jabez Muggins here, who I must admit has played the double role of whisky-trader and spy to a demonstration. The last time my escape was owing to the fleetness of General Brock's horse, which I managed to mount in the very heart of the encampment, and which I turned loose when I reached the lake, a mile north of here."

"Whoop tee doodle!" exclaimed Jabez Muggins, "if you arn't got the grit, Cap, I never see'd a polar b'ar that bad."

"Thanks for the compliment, Jabez," replied the captain. "I owe you a debt of gratitude that I hope I will be able to pay you some day. And I must say that you have been such a skillful actor in your parts of the dramas of which I have been a supernumerary, that I am half-inclined to believe you are the Spirit of the Woods."

"Oh, Jupiter, Cap!" exclaimed the trader, and he exchanged glances with One-Armed Alf, "sich a thing is horribly onpossible."

"Harkee, friends, harkee!" suddenly exclaimed the Giant Scout, in a low, husky tone; "yonder sits danger upon the margin of the opening."

He pointed across the glade, where all saw an Indian warrior seated in a small bark canoe, his head bent in the attitude of listening. He was an Indian whose evil, malignant features once seen would never be forgotten.

"Friends," said One-Armed Alf, and his voice sounded still huskier than ever, "I have seen that Indian before."

"Indeed," said Captain North, "but you are trembling, Alf—shaking as if with an ague-fit."

"I know it, but never mind. This air around us is chilly," replied the scout; "yes, I saw that Indian's face years ago, friends; I remember it well, for it was he that assisted a score of others in torturing me, by CUTTING MY RIGHT ARM OFF! And now, friends, he must die, for he is the last one of that accursed set."

Here he broke suddenly off and remained quiet for full a minute. Then he started suddenly up again, and said, in a strange tone:

"Friends, the Spirit of the Wilderness is near you—you shall know him—he will slay yonder savage—behold!"

As he uttered the last word, he raised his long cane and pointed it with calm deliberation toward the listening red-skin. Our friends wondered at this movement, but when they saw a little jet of fire issue from the end of the cane, and heard the sharp, whiplike crack of a fire-arm, something of the reality dawned upon their minds—*One-Armed Alf was the Spirit of the Woods, and his long rude cane was the disguised rifle with which he slew his victims!*

A cry of mortal agony followed the report, and the savage was seen to drop forward over the side of his canoe, where he hung, his hands beating the water in the convulsions of death.

"There, friends," the scout said, "with that red-skin, dies the secret of the Spirit of the Woods. I am that avenger, and this cane contains the rifle with which I have wreaked vengeance upon those who destroyed my home, then essayed to torture me to death by cutting off my arms and feet. But, thank God, I escaped when they had deprived me of but one limb, and since then I have made it my sole object to slay those demons, and you have seen the last one expire."

"You have kept your secret well, friend Alf," said Captain St. John, "for the name of the Spirit of the Woods has been spoken by every lip, red and white, in the North-west. The night of the conflict at your cabin, I suspected Darcy Mayfield of being the avenger; but I see now I was mistaken. I suppose no one knew that you were the avenger?"

"Yes; Darcy Mayfield knew it, and so did our old friend Jabez Muggins here, who is none other than my African servant and companion, Ethiope."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed St. John.

"Ho! ho! ho! ho!" laughed Muggins, slapping the captain on the shoulder; "you bet, Cap, I'm the very chick that peddled whisky, and alers managed to git *dead* drunk at councils and sich like, whar thar war lots to be heard."

"Yes," added the scout, "to Jabez is owing all my success as a scout. Through him I have been enabled, time and again, to give the settlement such information as saved them from destruction; and to me I will say he has been a true and noble friend."

"Well, really; this is singular and surprising news to me, Alf; but what connection has Darcy Mayfield with your work of vengeance?"

"He is interested as deeply as I, for the same demons that deprived me of an arm deprived him of a young wife. She was also my sister, and with her disappeared a young brother, neither of whom we have ever heard of since the night the Indians, under one Lieutenant Mackclogan, attacked our home."

"Poor Darcy!" said the captain: "I knew some great sorrow rested upon his heart; but I suppose death has relieved him of all."

"I presume he perished in the flames of my cabin, that terrible night, captain."

"But that rifle of yours—how does it work, anyhow?"

"It is a slender steel barrel, with a thin bore, concealed inside of this cane, and is loaded from the breech, and fired by means of a concealed spring, all of which is effected by a pressure of the fingers without any one suspecting the truth. The muzzle of the piece is concealed by this silver ferule, which you see drops upon a concealed hinge by pressing a certain spring in the head of the cane. Under each of these little knots here is a spring, and alongside of the barrel is a receptacle in which I can carry a score of cartridges. The gun was the work of an ingenious Yankee gunsmith, living in Pennsylvania. And so now, friends, you all know the secret of the Spirit of the Woods, which amounts to nothing much, after all. When the secret of the Specter Skiff, and Maid of Michigan, is fully known, you'll find it is no more of a mystery than the Spirit of the Woods."

"Well, really, this revelation is something more than an everyday story—something that will cause no little surprise to those who have known you and heard of the Spirit," said Captain North.

"Then it was you who slew the traitorous Malagua, the night we were decoyed from the old French fort," said Margery Bliss.

"It was. After he had left you with Captain North, he started to follow you down the creek. I knew his intentions were to murder North, and so I— Hark!"

The deep and sullen roar, like that of a cannon, suddenly rolled athwart the night.

"Je-rusalem crickets!" exclaimed Jabez Muggins, "what on 'arth war that bu'sted!"

"I think it was the report of a cannon; and as it came from over the lake, I dare say it came from the English cruiser, which I learn is patrolling this part of the lake," said the scout.

"Ah!—there goes that boom again."

True enough, the sullen boom of a cannon again rolled across the lake and went crashing in thunderous echoes back among the forest hills. This time, however, a path was plowed through the reeds, by a cannon-ball that came skimming along the surface of the lake, and spent its force in the bank not fifty paces from where our friends were concealed.

"It can't be possible that it is the English cruiser endeavoring to drive us from our covert?" asked Captain St. John.

"It looks that way, captain," replied the scout; "inasmuch as they have the range pretty well, I believe it would be well to change our position."

All favored this idea, and so the scout took up the paddle and headed his canoe around toward the west. In doing so, he was compelled to swing out into the moonlit opening; and the very instant that they were exposed to the light, a long bateau, filled with a dozen savages, glided out into the opening, and came to a stand, directly upon the path of the hunted party.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A LUCKY SHOT.

THE presence of One Armed Alf and his friends in the opening appeared to be as great a surprise to the savages as was the latter's presence to the former. Both boats came to a sudden halt, and for several moments their occupants glared at each other, as if paralyzed by the sight. But the savages soon discovered the almost helpless condition of their enemies, and an ejaculation passed from lip to lip, that finally deepened into a wild, vindictive yell.

Knives and tomahawks leaped from their sheaths and fastenings. The long bateau was swung slowly around; a dozen oars dipped as one, and the craft shot alongside of the whites' canoe.

Before a savage, however, could rise to his feet, the cane of One-Armed Alf was leveled upon a red-skin's breast, and the next instant he sunk lifeless with a bullet through his heart.

Then arose a fearful yell upon the night, which had scarcely died upon the savages' lips, when the thunderous boom of that unknown cannon again rent the air; a ball came crashing through the reeds, and struck the Indian bateau square astern, splitting it from end to end, and hurling the savages, torn and mangled, in every direction, and enveloping those in the canoe in a shower of spray.

It was a lucky shot, for it had saved the fugitives from a merciless death.

"Judas Iskarat!" exclaimed Jabez Muggins. "Warn't that an' ell-screecher? Whoop tee doodle! Didn't it rarefy them red touch-me-nots into the air with a vengeance? Ho! ho! ho!"

"It was a God-send, that shot," said Captain North.

"Ay, Cap, you bet yer gizzard it war, for it spread 'em like huckleberries all over Lake Michigan," returned Muggins.

"And now, friends, is the time to make our way from this place," said One-Armed Alf.

"Yes, yes," replied St. John; "pull for the open lake, and then head away to the southward; that will take us out of two perils."

Jabez Muggins seized the paddle, and at once sent the canoe across the glade and crashing through the reeds. In a few minutes they shot out into the lake, and then turned southward.

The scout now swept the waters around him, and was not a little surprised to see a little sail-boat, scarcely a hundred yards distant, coming down before the wind, while far behind it he could see a large boat evidently in pursuit of the little sail. And even while his eyes were upon the pursuer, he saw a tongue of fire shoot out from the prow of the craft. A heavy boom rolled across the waters and died away among the hills in sullen intonations.

"I tell you, friends," said the scout, "that little sail yonder is that famous Specter Skiff, and I am almost positive it is being pursued by the Englishman."

"We are bound to know soon, Alf," replied North, "for that little sail is fast coming upon us."

"Yes; and for fear it contains enemies, we had better put ashore at once," said the scout.

"Ashore she goes!" replied Muggins; and he turned the craft shortly around with the ease of a skilled boatman.

In a few moments they had touched upon the beach, but before they had all landed, the little sail turned directly upon their wake, and came rushing in alongside their canoe, upon the beach.

"Halt!" suddenly demanded One-Armed Alf: "who comes there?"

"I, Alf—Darcy Mayfield," was the reply.

"Oh, thank God!" burst in accents of joy from the scout's lips, as he sprung forward and grasped his supposed dead friend by the hand; "this is a joyous surprise to me, Darcy, for I supposed you had died that night at my cabin, and had been consumed in the fire that burnt the house."

"No, Alf, I was carried away by two Englishmen a prisoner; but of this hereafter. I have another joyous surprise for you. I have found her—Maria, and my darling wife, and brother Amos, too."

"Brother Charles, is it possible that we meet once more?" cried Maria, running ashore from the little sail-boat, and throwing her arms about the giant scout's neck. "Oh, brother! brother! Heaven has heard my prayers at last! And here, brother, is Amos, too."

The giant scout embraced his sister and brother, too full of emotion for expression; and while he was thus engaged, Darcy Mayfield, or rather Walter Garfield, and Captain St. John exchanged words of joy over their reunion.

The meeting was followed by introductions all around. This led to the discovery that Mrs. Maria Garfield was the cousin of Captain St. John, or Robert Imbercourt—the same whom Sir Joshua Pellington had tried to persuade Robert to marry, in order to bring about a union of their English possessions.

The brothers and sisters and friends, all hastily narrated the events that had transpired since they had last met; and One-Armed Alf, or as he really was, Charles Bradbury, was not a little surprised when he learned that his sister Maria was the mysterious Maid of Michigan.

The approach of the English cruiser down the coast, soon put an end to the conversation of the little band of friends.

To elude whatever dangers might be lurking in the forest, the party took to their boats again, and by hugging the shadows of the shore closely, they succeeded in eluding the cruiser, and by daylight the following morning, they turned into the mouth of the Muskegon, and landed at Point Michigan.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH.

OLD Jack Eller and Colonel Bliss were the first to greet the arrival of the fugitives under One-Armed Alf, at the settlement. The colonel's joy knew no bounds when he was enabled once more to clasp his darling Margery to his breast; and when he learned that her escape from the treacherous Malagua was all owing to Captain Paul North, the young officer became the recipient of a shower of thanks and praises. But he was not willing to be contented with these. Nothing but the possession of Margery herself would ever satisfy him, though he did not tell the colonel so at that time, for he knew that his English uniform would be a sufficient incentive to a prompt refusal by the loyal old American patriot. But, like the noble youth that he was, he took up arms in defense of the land, which from infancy he had claimed as his home—the land which had been a home to his father when England rejected him. Side by side with Captain St. John he fought through the terrible war that followed, and when peace was declared, he went back and claimed in wedlock, the hand of Margery Bliss. And then the old colonel did not object, for he felt proud of the noble Major Paul North.

Captain St. John and Hellice Arvine were married at the close of the war, and took up their home in the territory of Michigan, along with most of their friends, who have been participants in our romance.

Charles Bradbury, or One-Armed Alf, as we have known him, served as a scout through the war of '12, and at its close received an appointment as civil officer of the territorial government of Michigan, in which capacity he won new distinctions and honors.

Colonel Bliss and old Jack Eller took an active part in defense of their country, and Jabez Muggins, served with One-Armed Alf, to the last.

For a long time the mystery of the Firefaces, who rescued our friends from the Indians at the old French fort when attacked there, puzzled Colonel Bliss as to its cause of secrecy; but in the course of time, the mystery was solved. A band of lake pirates had been traced to this point, and there captured in a spacious underground apartment which had probably been used as a secret powder-magazine by those who had first erected the fort. The object that the Firefaces had in view, in rescuing our friends, will never be known; though it was in order, no doubt, to save themselves from dangers. For, had the fort fallen into the hands of the savages at that time, they would doubtless have found their secret rendezvous.

Sir Joshua Pellington roamed Lake Michigan in his Scorpion in search of the Maid of Michigan, for several days after the mystery of the Specter Skiff had been solved and the little craft had disappeared from the lake. Some way or other he had learned that the object of his search, Maria Bradbury, was aboard the craft, and he resolved to put forth every effort to capture her, as well as Robert Imbercourt, alias Philip St. John.

But the villain was doomed to disappointment; and one day while his vessel lay off the eastern coast of the lake, he took a small boat and put ashore to meet by appointment, one of his Indian spies; and while there, he was shot through the heart by an unseen enemy; and at last he had reaped the wages of sin—Death.

THE END.

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